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ABSTRACT

This volume presents a range of research and perspectives dedicated to advancing understanding of schools through empirical study and theoretical analysis. The eight chapters are: (1) "Organizational Learning in High-Stakes Accountability Environments: Lessons from an Urban School District" (Helen M. Marks and Susan M. Printy); (2) "Sources of Victory, Seeds of Defeat: Linking Enactment Politics and Implementation Developments" (Donna Redmond Jones and Betty Malen); (3) "Interest Groups in National Reading Policy: Perceived Influence and Beliefs on Teaching Reading" (Mengli Song and Cecil G. Miskel); (4) "Bridging and Buffering Parent Involvement in Schools: Managing Exchanges of Social and Cultural Resources" (Rodney T. Ogawa and Susan Clark Studer); (5) "Teachers' Work and Instructional Management, Part I: Alternative Views of the Task of Teaching" (Brian Rowan); (6) "Teachers' Work and Instructional Management, Part II: Does Organic Management Promote Expert Teaching?" (Brian Rowan); (7) "Collective Efficacy and School Organization: A Multilevel Analysis of Teacher Influence in Schools" (Roger D. Goddard); and (8) "A Test of a Model of School Achievement in Rural Schools: The Significance of Collective Efficacy" (Wayne K. Hoy, Page A. Smith, and Scott R. Sweetland). Each chapter concludes with a bibliography. (RT)

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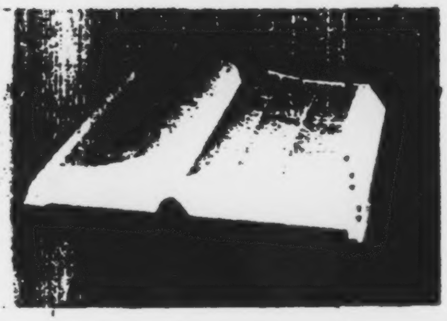

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edited by
Wayne Hoy and Cecil Miskel

A VOLUME IN:
RESEARCH AND THEORY IN
EDUCATIONAL ADMININSTRATION

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THEORY AND RESEARCH IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Volume 1
THEORY AND RESEARCH IN
EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
Editors: Wayne K. Hoy, *The Ohio State University* and
Cecil G. Miskel, *The University of Michigan*

THEORY AND RESEARCH IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Volume 1

Edited by

Wayne K. Hoy
The Ohio State University
and
Cecil G. Miskel
The University of Michigan

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Roger D. Goddard	*The University of Michigan*
Wayne K. Hoy	*The Ohio State University*
Donna Redmond Jones	*University of Maryland—College Park*
Betty Malen	*University of Maryland—College Park*
Helen M. Marks	*The Ohio State University*
Cecil G. Miskel	*The University of Michigan*
Rodney T. Ogawa	*University of California—Riverside*
Susan M. Printy	*The Ohio State University*
Brian Rowan	*University of Michigan*
Page A. Smith	*The University of Texas at San Antonio*
Mengli Song	*The University of Michigan*
Susan Clark Studer	*California Baptist University*
Scott R. Sweetland	*The Ohio State University*

EDITORS' COMMENTS

Wayne Hoy and Cecil Miskel

This series is dedicated to advancing our understanding of schools through empirical study and theoretical analysis. Scholars, both young and established, are invited to publish original analyses, but we especially encourage young scholars to contribute to *Theory and Research in Educational Administration.* This first issue provides a mix of beginning and established scholars and a range of theoretical perspectives. Eight separate but related studies were selected for this first issue.

Three of the research pieces deal with the intended and unintended consequences of policy and political initiatives in schools. Do high-stakes accountability environments threaten the potential of learning organizations? Marks and Printy grapple with that question. Not surprisingly, they anticipate the latent dysfunctional consequences of high-stakes accountability as they provide a careful analysis of urban school district responses to state policies. Well-intended initiatives produced unintended consequences that threatened the capacity for organizational learning in these schools. In a similar fashion, Jones and Malen's findings suggest that political strategies that use insider dynamics can foster successful enactment of reforms but often at a cost of undermining efforts to implement the policy. Song and Miskel focus their analysis on national reading policy. An examination of national interests groups and policymakers suggests that an assessment of various groups' influence is necessary if policy actors are to make sensible judgments in choosing allies and building coalitions for effective actions.

Two of the papers are informed by contingency theory. Ogawa and Studer are concerned with the relationship between the school and its community. They propose that both buffering and bridging strategies enable schools to deal with parents effectively. Because schools depend on parents for resources, they bridge to parents in cooperative fashion, but because parents often pose uncertainty, schools also buffer parent influence by limiting their access. Yet, there is divergence from contingency theory because schools depend primarily on parents to provide socio-cultural

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rather than material resources; hence, schools often use strategies that shape rather than diminish dependence on parents. Rowan, also draws ideas from contingency theory to examine the extent to which the nature of teachers' instructional work affects patterns of instructional management in schools. His data support the explanation that teachers who face increased task variety actively work to construct "organic" patterns of instructional management to reduce task uncertainty and to increase workplace motivation and commitment.

Three papers examine teachers in schools. Rowan is intrigued by the variation in the nature of teachers' work both in terms of task variety and task uncertainty. He finds that teachers do not see their work as many organizational theorists do, that is, as a non-routine form of work; in fact, teachers view teaching as either as a routine task or "expert task." In spite of the fact that many teachers endorsed a constructivist view of teaching, few concluded it was a non-routine task. Moreover, teachers in different disciplines have different views about both the nature of academic knowledge and desirable teaching practices. Both Goddard and Hoy and his colleagues use social cognitive theory to develop an argument of the importance of collective efficacy in positively influencing student achievement. Hoy, Smith, and Sweetland build on their earlier work to demonstrate that collective efficacy of schools is pivotal in explaining student achievement in a sample of rural schools. Goddard shows that that collective efficacy is also an important predictor of the practice of involving teachers in important school decisions. He concludes that the more we learn how school practices are related to collective efficacy, the more we will know about what school leaders can do to develop collective efficacy and enhance student achievement.

Theory and Research in Educational Administration is about understanding schools. We welcome articles and analyses that explain school organizations and administration. We are interested in the "why" questions about schools. To that end, case analyses, surveys, large data base analyses, experimental studies, and theoretical analyses are all welcome. We provide the space for authors to do comprehensive analyses where that is appropriate and useful. We believe that *Theory and Research in Educational Administration* has the potential to make an important contribution to our field, but we will be successful only if our colleagues join us in this mission.

CHAPTER 1

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING IN HIGH-STAKES ACCOUNTABILITY ENVIRONMENTS

Lessons from an Urban School District[1]

Helen M. Marks and Susan M. Printy

The study investigates whether the high stakes accountability environment in Ohio and one of its urban school districts threatens the potential for organizational learning among a sample of 13 low-performing schools. A descriptive analysis compares the capacity for organizational learning—tapped by measures of participative decision making, shared commitment and collaborative activity, knowledge and skills, and leadership in two sets of schools. One—the 13 urban elementary, middle, and high schools operating under stringent state and district accountability mandates, demonstrates less capacity for organizational learning than the other—a sample of 24 elementary, middle, and high schools selected to participate in a study of school restructuring in the United States. An analysis of school district responses to state policies shows that well-intended initiatives resulted in unintended consequences capable of undermining the capacity for organizational learning in schools.

INTRODUCTION

Organizational learning has emerged as a promising approach for schools to improve their performance. Because of generally low ratings on state-

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issued report cards, urban schools in high-stakes accountability environments could stand to gain by engaging in organizational learning. For such schools, however, the stringent accountability measures states impose frequently result in district efforts to control the educational process through standardizing curriculum and instruction (Smith, 1995; Sizer, 1995; Resnick & Nolan, 1995; Kerchner, Koppich & Weeres, 1997). Such control may undermine the capacity of schools to improve in fundamental ways through organizational learning.

Evidence from a study of accountability in the urban elementary, middle, and high schools investigated in the School Restructuring Study (SRS) would support such a hypothesis (Newmann, King & Rigdon, 1997). The SRS schools, representing 22 school districts in 16 states, were the focus of a five-year study on school restructuring in the United States. Among these schools, where strong external accountability existed in the form of state-mandated assessments, researchers found weak organizational capacity in terms of knowledge and skills, teachers' participation in decision making, shared commitment, and collaborative activity. In states and districts where external accountability was comparatively weak, SRS schools tended to develop organizational capacity and internal accountability within the school community that influenced their ability to improve and be effective.

How applicable are these findings to low-performing, non-restructured urban schools, particularly those located in high-stakes accountability environments where the pressure to produce performance gains is intense? How do the accountability demands on these schools in the form of district policies and practices affect their abilities to learn? Based on previous research, our own and others', we argue that learning of this sort depends on schools' having sufficient organizational capacity—that is, structural, human, social, and cultural resources—to equip them for the task. By assessing a sample of urban schools on their capacity for organizational learning and analyzing the policy environment within which these schools currently operate, we demonstrate that high-stakes accountability policies may adversely affect schools' ability to learn.

We conducted our inquiry as part of the Urban Neighborhoods Study (UNS) in a project involving thirteen schools—six elementary, two middle, and five high schools. These UNS schools, located in a large Ohio school district threatened by state-imposed sanctions, serve substantial proportions of economically disadvantaged and minority students. Data for the study were collected between 1998-2001. During this time, because the district's performance fell very short of state standards, the state assigned the school district the lowest of its ratings—"academic emergency."

Because of our interest in working with the UNS schools on their improvement efforts, we invited them to participate in a study that would benchmark them on various dimensions of school organizational capacity compared with a national sample of restructuring schools, the SRS schools. Since these schools have been the subject of a large body of published research on dimensions of school organization that enhanced student achievement, we believed the UNS schools could benefit from the comparative analysis by considering the implications of the research findings for their own school improvement efforts. While the UNS schools were under great pressure from their district to improve, they had very little school data to help them, except for their passing rates on student proficiency tests in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and citizenship. The schools lacked school organizational data that they could use for diagnostic purposes. All of the UNS schools agreed to participate in the benchmarking project, as well as in a related study on the contexts of student learning. In a later section, we provide a fuller explanation of these studies.

The conceptual framework for the study is organizational learning in its application to schools. We concentrate on those elements of school organization that establish the capacity to learn. Because the UNS schools were operating in an intense accountability environment, we also provide a description of the state's policy context for school accountability and the steps the urban school district took to respond to its state-imposed "academic emergency" rating. Against that backdrop, we assess the UNS schools on their capacity for organizational learning, comparing them with the SRS schools. We interpret the findings from that analysis by returning to the policy context and drawing on case study and document analysis data from the UNS schools. The study concludes with lessons for practice and suggestions for policy alternatives.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AND ITS APPLICATION TO SCHOOLS

Though the field of organizational learning has not developed in any consistent way, most scholars agree on at least five defining concepts. [2] Organizations that seek to learn:

1. identify and correct problems,
2. gain insight from past experience,
3. acquire pertinent new knowledge,
4. process information through social means, and
5. apply knowledge to change the organization.

Directing energy at becoming more effective, these organizations develop shared understandings to adapt to threats and challenges in the environment, to improve organizational practices, and to achieve their objectives. Innovation, experimentation, flexibility, and initiative are hallmarks of their cultures. Within organizations that learn, leadership creates and sustains processes to nurture ideas and support change initiated by others, empowering stakeholders at all levels to deal with problems and to improve technologies. Leaders make knowledge available to those who need it and encourage members to apply what they learn to their work.

Research on Organizational Learning in Schools

How organizational learning works in schools has gained the attention of researchers, most of whom take the theoretical perspective that change in schools requires a systemic approach (Elmore, 1993; Fuhrman, 1993; Fullan, 1999). Researchers have examined school and out-of school conditions that facilitate organizational learning (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1995; Leonard, 1996; Sharratt, 1996; Marks & Louis, 1999; Marks et al., 2000). Some have focused on school leadership, including transformational leadership by the principal and shared leadership of teachers (Leithwood, Tomlinson & Genge, 1996; Leithwood, Leonard, & Sharratt, 1998; Larson-Knight, 2000; Sheppard & Brown, 2000; Silins, Mulford, Sarins & Bishop, 2000; Marks & Printy, 2001). Other scholars have investigated the ways in which schools use knowledge (Cousins, 1995; Earl, 1995; King, 1995; Lafleur, 1995). Some have also examined organizational learning as a necessary capacity to implement effectively such school reform initiatives as decentralization (Leonard, 1998; Wohlstetter, Smyer, & Mohrman, 1994), leadership teams (Chrispeels, Brown & Castillo, 2000), or school improvement planning (Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell & Valentine, 1999). Researchers have generally not investigated the impact of organizational learning on educational outcomes (for an exception, see Marks, Louis and Printy, 2001).

A series of studies focusing on the SRS has contributed to conceptualizing organizational learning in schools (Marks & Louis, 1997; Marks & Louis, 1999; Louis, Marks & Kruse, 1996; Newmann, Marks & Gamoran, 1996; Louis & Marks, 1998). In the course of their restructuring, all SRS schools had departed significantly from conventional practice, a process that probably entailed learning. Because these schools varied in the success of their restructuring efforts, one could reasonably assume that they also varied in how effectively they learned. Relating the literature on organizational learning to their knowledge of the schools, SRS researchers came to believe that the restructuring schools differed among themselves in their capacity to engage in organizational learning. To examine whether these differences were empirically verifiable and, if so, whether they had implications for practice, the researchers developed an index of the capacity for organizational learning based on characteristics that learning organizations typically exhibit (Marks & Louis, 1999).

The Capacity for Organizational Learning

Studies on organizational learning have identified characteristics common to schools that successfully enter the cycle of action and reflection that lead to school improvement (Louis & Kruse, 1995; Leithwood et al., 1998). Unified school cultures where inquiry into teaching and learning is ongoing improve schools and lead to high performance. These cultures typically share six common elements that can be thought of as school capacity for organizational learning:

1. simplified organizational structure,
2. participative decision making,
3. shared commitment and collaborative activity,
4. adequate knowledge and skills,
5. transformational leadership, and
6. feedback and accountability.

(For additional background on the relationship of these characteristics to organizational learning, see Marks and Louis, 1999; Marks et al., 2000; Marks and Printy, 2001).

Simplified Organizational Structure

Typical organizational arrangements in schools (e.g. self-contained classrooms, departmental divisions, and complicated schedules) may compound the challenges of using information to develop shared understandings among teachers, thus hindering organizational learning (Kruse, Louis & Bryk, 1995; Bryk et al., 1996). The complex organization of large schools inhibits the development of professional community (Lee & Smith, 1997) and interferes with reaching consensus, a process entailing learning (Leithwood, Leonard, & Sharratt, 1998). Because of the adverse impact of such structural impediments on human interaction, removing them may be more critical to improving school performance than adding new resources (Sarason, 1996). Since organizational learning depends on coordination through informal social norms and knowledge acquisition through boundary spanning activities and relationships, hierarchical controls may also be obstructive (Starbuck, 1992).

Participative Decision Making

Teachers contribute to organizational learning by participating in and influencing school decision-making processes (Marks & Louis, 1999). How and where teachers exercise influence may vary in specific situations, ranging from representation on governance councils to working with colleagues to make school decisions regarding curriculum and instructional

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practices. Unless teachers participate in school decision making, however, particularly in areas that affect teaching and learning, they are unlikely to achieve professional community, high quality pedagogy, and strong student performance (Marks & Louis, 1997, 1999). Teachers who join with colleagues to explore issues and solve problems at the school-wide level learn and develop in the process. They tend to apply those same processes of inquiry in their classrooms, resulting in improved instructional practices (Tharp, 1993; Rait, 1995).

Shared Commitment and Collaborative Activity

Organizational learning depends on individuals adding to the collective knowledge of the organization. Because learning by a social system extends beyond learning by individuals (Probst & Buchel, 1997), school-wide dialogue is critical. In schools, the social processing of experiences and insights tends to occur and remain within small, fragmented groups, grade levels, or departments. Sharing knowledge across the organization requires integrating processes or deliberate efforts by organizational members (Wenger, 1998). Through the social processing of information school-wide, members forge consensus about organizational performance and steps to take to improve it (Marks & Louis, 1999).

Learning in the workplace is best understood in terms of community. In community employees form identities, share meaning, become practitioners, and innovate (Brown & Duguid, 1996; Wenger, 1998). Because school-wide knowledge processing occurs most naturally within professional communities where teachers collaborate to construct meaning from information, creating professional community enhances school capacity for organizational learning. When teachers share a sense of purpose and a common focus on student learning, moreover, they tend to take collective responsibility to accomplish school goals (Dixon, 1999). Through collegial relations, teachers see their work as a joint enterprise (Little, 1990). Rather than feeling isolated in their classrooms, they think of themselves as working together toward common goals for student learning.

Knowledge and Skills

Learning depends on an existing knowledge base, acquiring new knowledge, and being open to new ideas. In schools, knowledge can come from several sources:

1. organizational history,
2. knowledge already held by professionals, parents, students, and community members;
3. knowledge that schools import from experts and the experiences of others; and

4. knowledge school members generate to solve unique school problems (Kruse, 1995; Huber, 1991; Senge et al., 1999).

Learning becomes more than a means to prepare for work; learning becomes the way to solve the problems work presents (Dixon, 1999). Organizational learning depends on active inquiry to acquire needed information, therefore, and on collaborative activity to integrate the new knowledge into the organizational context, thus embedding new skills into practice (Nonanka & Takeuchi, 1996; Van de Ven et al., 1999; Dixon, 1999).

Leadership

School leaders develop the capacity for organizational learning by fostering a culture of inquiry within the organization (Leithwood et al., 1998; Leithwood et al., 1999; Larson-Knight, 2000.) Transformational leaders, who focus on problem finding and problem solving, often reframe problems as ways to improve organizational effectiveness. Acknowledging the potential contributions of members throughout the organization, principals as transformational leaders tap the energy, spirit, and expertise of all stakeholders who are willing to challenge the status quo (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Heller & Firestone, 1995; Senge et al., 1999). Knowing that the best solution to a problem may not be their own idea, such leaders believe that stakeholders have the interest and competency to contribute, and they establish learning processes to arrive at solutions as routine school practice (Schein, 1992).

Feedback and Accountability

Organizational learning is a process that allows the organization to move forward on a continuing basis. Because adaptation and change are constants, no organizational problem stays solved for long. The process of inquiry necessary to organizational learning depends on valid and regular feedback, from agents both inside and outside the organization (Senge, 1990). Feedback contributes to new solutions, but new situations tend to engender a fresh set of problems (Dixon, 1999).

Most states now provide feedback to schools, school districts, and the general public based on performance indicators, most of which reflect student achievement on standardized tests. While providing this type of information is a useful step in assessing schools' progress, states' accountability systems typically include other components—standards for determining what counts for the quality of performance, consequences in the form of rewards and sanctions, and a central agency that processes the information and administers the accountability system (Rothman, 1995).

Accountability systems may also be internal to the school. In such instances, the school staff works together to develop standards for students' performance, assesses students' progress against these standards, and develops its own system of rewards and sanctions, including strong peer pressure (Newmann et al., 1997). Internal systems of accountability require staff consensus, contribute to staff cohesion, and stimulate ongoing skill development (Newmann et al.). While external and internal systems of accountability can coexist, the influence of a powerful external system, as we suggest in this study, tends to undermine the ability of a school staff to develop internal accountability.

PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY: THE SYSTEM IN OHIO

Matching trends in other states, Ohio has adopted standards-based, systemic reform (Massell, Kirst, & Hoppe, 1997). Key elements of this strategy are challenging academic standards set by the state and assessments aligned with the standards to determine whether districts and schools are performing adequately. However, while Ohio has student assessments in place in the form of proficiency tests, the state has progressed slowly in developing new curriculum and performance standards. To provide guidance to school districts in developing and aligning curriculum with the state's assessment program, Ohio has used competency-based curriculum models since the early 1990s. The state's existing standards, developed in 1983, serve as a basis for the curriculum models. While Ohio issues public report cards annually to rate districts and individual schools on performance indicators, critics fault the state for being laggard on developing an updated system of standards as a basis for assessing student performance (Sandham, 2001).

Currently, Ohio's proficiency testing program assesses students' knowledge and skills in five subject areas and at four different grade levels. [3] When first administered to ninth graders in 1991, the proficiency tests measured only minimum competencies. Since then, the scope of the tests has increased and the skill level of the tests has become progressively more challenging. Senate Bill 55, passed by the Ohio legislature in 1997, introduced new initiatives to strengthen the performance of Ohio's schools (Ohio Legislative Service Commission, 1997). Among the law's most significant features is the 4th Grade Reading Guarantee. Besides calling for intensive remediation and support for below-level readers in the first four grades, the 4th Grade Guarantee required the retention of students who fail the 4th grade reading proficiency test.

The bill also moved the high school exit exam from 9th to 10th grade, added course requirements for graduation, and increased the number of performance indicators used in rating the states' schools from 18 to 27. Under the current legislation, school districts not meeting "effective" criteria are required to implement a three-year continuous improvement plan;

those that remain "under academic watch" or "in a state of academic emergency" are subject to intervention rules developed by the State Board of Education.

AN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT'S RESPONSE TO THE STATE'S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

Because it met only 3 of 18 performance standards, the urban school district in our study received an "academic emergency" warning in the spring of 1998, one year before the state issued its first official report card. Anticipating a low rating again in 1999, the superintendent developed a plan to spur the district toward consistent improvement. Backed by the local school board, the plan delineated four district goals:

- a 3rd grade reading guarantee;
- the readiness of all students for Algebra I in 9th grade;
- a meaningful internship during high school; and
- competence in technology for graduating students as a tool for lifelong learning.

The superintendent's plan also specified a means to help accomplish the goals, namely: site-based school continuous improvement planning. Not long after, the local school board ordered a comprehensive stocktaking of district strengths and weaknesses through a Curriculum Management Audit. In response to the audit, the superintendent called for three additional priorities: a curriculum alignment and instructional management program; an intensified district-wide literacy focus, and a system of performance incentives for administrators and teachers.

School Continuous Improvement Plans

Reflecting a national trend to place responsibility for school improvement at each individual school's door, the district directed each school to develop a School Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP). The first round of SCIPs, developed by a team of school personnel, parents, and community members, sought to identify school strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and barriers. The SCIP teams were also to select two academic objectives and one non-academic objective to align with the district goals for improvement, specific means for assessment and accountability, a budget, and a schedule for review. These plans were first implemented during the 1998-1999 school year.

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The first-year SCIPs generally proved inadequate for strategic planning purposes. By focusing on a few key competencies, schools found they could show higher gains than schools with more ambitious plans. To counter this problem in the second year, the district required schools to focus their SCIPs on core competencies aligned with the district's academic goals. In so doing, the district took the process out of local hands and diminished the potential of the document as a way of planning for significant change.

The third year of SCIP planning, conducted during 2000, the year of this study, brought additional changes that continued to diminish the process. Because the original composition of the SCIP teams included parents and community members, meetings generally took place in the evenings, requiring teacher representatives either to remain at school or to return later. Sometimes, however, the parents or community participants failed to show up. In the new union contract for the district's teachers, the SCIP team became the province of each school's Association Building Council (ABC). Made up of five teachers, the ABC functions as the union's advisory committee to assist in developing school policies and programs. While the district informally encouraged the ABCs to involve parents and community in developing and reviewing the SCIP plan, contractual time requirements complicated the issue. In effect, the union contract reduced the potential to draw the voice of the community into the SCIP process.

Curriculum Management Audit

To submit school district operations to an objective, overall appraisal, the school board contracted with Phi Delta Kappa to conduct a comprehensive curriculum management audit. Taking a systemic approach to their analysis, the auditors assessed the district against five standards:

1. control of resources,
2. objectives,
3. consistency and rational equity in the development and implementation of programs,
4. use of assessments, and
5. improved productivity.

After their intensive review, the auditors reported findings critical of the district, noting general inadequacy in policies regarding curriculum and instruction, budgeting, and professional development, as well as a lack of integration in program development and implementation.

The auditors also cited a lack of policy structure to guide principals, who functioned as autonomous decision makers within decentralized schools. The audit noted differences in the level of success experienced by students across demographic groups. Despite evidence of valuing diversity and a strong policy statement supporting equity, district practices failed to ameliorate continuing disparities in socio-economic and racial balance, access to programs, disciplinary procedures, and placement of students.

Curriculum Alignment and Instructional Management

Addressing the curricular issues of incoherence and ineffectiveness, the district arranged for an outside contractor to implement Target Teach, a system for curriculum alignment and instructional management. Coordinating district curriculum for K-8 with the competencies assessed by the Ohio Proficiency Tests, Target Teach provides teachers with benchmark documents and pacing guides to plan and schedule instruction. To ensure that students will meet the benchmarks for each competency, the program offers tests to be administered every eight weeks. A computer management program tracks and monitors student progress. Students who fail to reach mastery receive intervention.

An Intensive Focus on Literacy

The district viewed students' ability to read as a fundamental competence if they are to succeed in school. While recognizing the importance of student literacy, the district also had to contend with high levels of student mobility. Because students who moved between district schools often had difficulty in adjusting to new reading programs, the district sought to standardize reading instruction. The district selected two national research-based programs shown to be effective in urban schools. A third program, comprehensive and literature-based, supported district schools that partnered with a local university in a literacy effort. After hearing presentations on the three reading programs and visiting demonstration schools, in the spring of 1999, elementary school staffs selected their reading programs through majority vote.

Professional Development

Professional development for the elementary and middle schools centered on the implementation of both Target Teach and the reading programs. Using a "train the trainer" model, the district trained a literacy coordinator for each school, who then trained the school staff before the start of the 1999-2000 school year. Always an available resource in the school, the coordinators provided ongoing assistance, support, coaching, and resources for teachers. Literacy coordinators, like the science and math coordinators who had been placed in schools several years earlier through another initiative, received training in using the Target Teach assessments. In turn, these coordinators instructed their teaching colleagues.

Rewards and Sanctions

To provide a system of incentives that would engage administrators and teachers in the superintendent's initiatives for district and school improvement, the district developed two plans. For administrators, salary increases were to be contingent on school performance. The district gave administrators three years to show improvement on the state's performance standards. If their schools failed to demonstrate improvement, the district would reassign the principals. The lowest performing schools would be subject to reconstitution. The district also initiated a system of gain-sharing for teachers. For any school that showed improvement, staff members would receive a bonus.

Summary

Taken as a whole, this set of district initiatives appeared to represent a strong, well reasoned, and comprehensive response to its "academic emergency" rating on the state's accountability criteria. As is often the case with well-intended policies, however, while they succeed in finding ways to address particular issues, the policies may incur unintended consequences. We focus on unforeseen outcomes of these district initiatives in a later section.

ASSESSING CAPACITY FOR ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING IN THE UNS SCHOOLS

In the analysis that follows, we assess the UNS schools' capacity for organizational learning within the state and district accountability contexts we have described by comparing them with the SRS schools. We place our findings from the comparative analysis of the school groups in the contexts of state and district policies to examine how conditions in the UNS schools reflect on the policies. We begin by describing the two studies from which we have drawn our data and by comparing the respective samples.

Data and Sample

The Urban Neighborhoods Study—UNS

Since its inception in 1998, the Urban Neighborhoods Study has focused on a sample of thirteen schools located in a large Ohio urban school district. The overall purpose of the UNS project is to examine how the various contexts within which students live and learn (home, neighborhoods, peer groups, classrooms, and school) affect their academic achievement. While operating under the UNS umbrella and sharing personnel and resources, the present study was separately supported as an investigation of organizational learning in the UNS schools.

The six elementary schools in the UNS study include two magnet schools where student achievement is relatively high for the district, but still below state standards, and four neighborhood K-5 schools, where achievement is very low. One of the middle schools is a magnet school; the other middle school, one of the lowest performing in the state, serves most of the children from three of the UNS neighborhood elementary schools. The five high schools include two schools of choice—one a high-performing lottery school, the other a low-performing alternative school—and three regular comprehensive high schools, open to any district student. These high schools range in achievement from very low to comparatively high, although still below state standards.

The UNS incorporates both *extant* and *new* data. The *extant* data include census data on neighborhoods; school report cards; education management information systems data collected by the state; teacher, student, and parent survey data collected by the district; public records; and public statements by school district personnel. The *new* data include formal and informal interviews with the administrators of all the schools on several occasions; case studies and a cross case analysis of a subset of three schools in a pathway or feeder pattern; observational data collected on a weekly basis over a six-month period in selected classrooms of the three schools in the pathway study; and interviews with teachers, students, and administrators in the pathway schools. New data also include the survey data collected from the UNS teachers for comparison with the SRS schools.

The School Restructuring Study—SRS

The School Restructuring Study was conducted by the Center on the Organization and Restructuring of Schools at the University of Wisconsin-Madison between 1991-1995. Broad criteria for schools' participation in the study included restructuring in the areas of students' school experiences, teachers' work lives, school governance, and school-community partnerships. Over 300 public schools were nominated to participate because they had made "significant departures from conventional practice" (e.g., heterogeneous grouping, team teaching, interdisciplinary cur-

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riculum, coordinated social services on site, school governance councils) in their efforts at school reform. Out of these 300, 24 were selected for study.

Among the data collected as part of the SRS, teachers at participating schools completed surveys that provided information on their perceptions of their schools, colleagues, and students; their professional practice; their participation in reform efforts; and their personal background. [4] (A complete description of the SRS design and data collection procedures, as well as some of the major findings can be found in Newmann and Associates, 1996).

Sample

The primary quantitative data for the study are the survey responses of teachers in the SRS and UNS schools. The SRS sample is the larger of the two representing 910 teachers in 24 elementary, middle, and high schools. The UNS sample includes 196 teachers from twelve UNS schools. [5] While the SRS sample represents 86 percent of the teachers in the restructuring schools, the UNS sample represents 52 percent of the teachers in its schools.

The SRS and UNS Schools Compared

Differing somewhat from the exclusively urban sample of UNS schools, the SRS sample includes 20 schools located in major cities, three suburban schools, and one rural school (Table 1). Overall, the SRS schools are larger at all three grade levels. They enroll, on average, twice as many elementary students (632 compared with 309) as the UNS schools. Enrollment in the

TABLE 1
SRS and UNS Schools: Comparison of Demographic Characteristics

	School Restructuring Study			*Urban Neighborhoods Study*		
	Elementary (N=8)	*Middle (N=8)*	*High (N=8)*	*Elementary (N=6)*	*Middle (N=2)*	*High (N=5)*
% Urban	87.5	62.5	100	100	100	100
% Suburban	12.5	25.0				
% Rural		12.5				
Average Enrollment	632	827	1077	309	538	616
% Lunch Subsidy	49.8	28.3	31.6	75.0	71.0	30.0
% African American	16.2	10.4	34.5	64.3	66.8	55.4
% Hispanic	41.5	10.2	13.7	3.4	2.3	1.6
% Asian	3.47	10.0	4.6	2.2	2.0	2.7

SRS middle schools averages 827 students, compared with 538 in the UNS; and in the SRS high schools, 1077, compared with 616 in the UNS high schools. Poverty rates are higher among the UNS schools. At the elementary level, three-fourths of the UNS elementary students receive federal lunch subsidies compared with half the SRS students. While at the middle school level the difference is substantial—over 70 percent of the UNS students compared with 28 percent of those in the SRS, high school rates are the same for both groups.

Both samples include large proportions of minority students. At all three grade levels in the UNS schools the combined enrollments of Asian and Hispanic students total just about five percent, compared with about 45 percent in the SRS elementary schools and 20 percent in the SRS middle and high schools. The majority of students at all grade levels in the UNS schools are African American—about two-thirds of the elementary and middle school students and 55 percent of the high school students. In the SRS sample, the proportion of African American students is largest in the high schools at 35 percent, lowest in the middle schools at 10 percent, followed by 16 percent in the elementary schools.

Measuring the Capacity for Organizational Learning

We use a modified version of the capacity for organizational learning index developed for the studies referred to earlier in connection with the SRS schools.[6] Since the components and psychometric properties of these measures have been fully described elsewhere (see, for example, Marks and Louis, 1997 and 1999), we refer interested readers to those studies for additional information on the measures we present briefly here.

Accountability

Six items contributed to the *Accountability* measure. Teachers were asked if they were likely to receive consequences as a direct result of their students' academic success or failure, such as:

- increase or decrease in salary, bonus or merit pay;
- increase or decrease in paid opportunities for professional development;
- reward or penalty in teaching assignment or schedule;
- written congratulations or reprimand;
- oral congratulations or reprimand; or
- public recognition at faculty meetings, school publications, mass media, or press.

The 'Yes' or 'No' responses to these items were recoded as dummy variables (1 = 'Yes,' 0 = 'No'), summed, aggregated to the school level, and restandardized (M = 0, SD = 1).

Participative Decision Making

Constructed as an index, *participative decision making* sums the standardized scores for each of the three domains of teachers' influence—school policy, teachers' work life, and students' school experience. *Influence over School Policy* includes the extent of teachers' influence over the content of in-service programs, school building budgets, professional and teaching assignments, schedule, curriculum, hiring, selecting textbooks and other instructional materials. *Influence over Teachers' Worklife* includes two measures, standardized and summed—the extent of staff involvement in making decisions that affect them, and the level of the respondent's involvement in decisions that affect him or her personally. *Influence over Students' School Experience* comprises three items, standardized and summed: the extent of teachers' influence over student behavior codes, setting school policy for ability grouping, and control over disciplining students. The three domains of teacher influence were summed, aggregated to the school level, and standardized (M = 0, SD = 1).

Shared Commitment and Collaborative Activity

The component measures of the *Shared Commitment and Collaborative Activity* index used in this study are professional community and collective responsibility for student learning.

Professional Community is an index of five standardized constructs:

1. shared sense of purpose (colleagues share beliefs and values about central mission of the school; goals and priorities of the school are clear; and teacher and administrators are in close agreement on school discipline);
2. collective focus on student learning (importance of academic excellence or mastery of the subject matter; importance of higher level skills, such as reasoning, problem-solving, critical and creative thinking);
3. deprivatized practice (frequency with which colleagues observe your students' performance, grades, or test scores; frequency of visits to colleagues' classrooms to observe and discuss teaching; frequency of visits by colleague to observe your teaching; frequency of meaningful feedback on performance from peers);
4. reflective dialogue (in meetings with other teachers, how much time is spent diagnosing students' learning problems and arranging for help; how much time spent analyzing teaching practices and

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behaviors of team members; how often meet with colleagues to discuss teaching);

5. collaborative activity (how often you receive useful suggestions for curriculum materials, teaching techniques, or student activities from colleagues; extent of cooperative effort among staff members; effort to coordinate the content of courses with other teachers; time per month spent meeting with other teachers on lesson planning, curriculum development, guidance and counseling, evaluation of programs, or other collaborative work related to instruction).

The *professional community* index is aggregated to the school level and standardized (M = 0, SD = 1).

Collective Responsibility for Student Learning is an index of such items as attributing success or failure in teaching to one's own efforts; believing in the value of making efforts to do one's best as a teacher; believing that one's teaching makes a difference in he lives of students; believing that one is successful in educating one's students; believing all of one's students can learn; feeling responsible for all of the school's students; being expected to help maintain discipline in the entire school; finding the environment of the school orderly and beneficial for one's teaching. To construct the index, the scores on these items were summed, standardized, aggregated to the school level, and restandardized (M=0, SD=1).

Knowledge and Skills

Professional development serves as the measure of knowledge and skills for the analysis. The construct combines two items:

1. most of the in-service attended this year addressed issues specific to the needs of the school's students and staff; and
2. the in-service helped provide new knowledge and skills.

The components were standardized, summed, aggregated to the school level, and restandardized (M = 0, SD = 1).

Leadership

Leadership measures the extent to which the school administrator facilitates teachers' work and organizational development. Three items constitute the leadership construct:

1. the school administrator's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging;
2. the principal is interested in innovation and new ideas; and

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3. the principal influenced school restructuring efforts. The items were standardized, summed, aggregated to the school level, and restandardized (M = 0, SD = 1).

RESULTS

Although we have compared the UNS and SRS schools on many other measures, for illustrative purposes, we will focus primarily here on six central dimensions:

- accountability,
- participative decision making,
- professional community,
- collective responsibility for student learning,
- knowledge and skills, and
- leadership..

Accountability

Compared to their SRS counterparts, teachers in the UNS schools at all grade levels reported greater accountability, including being subject to rewards and sanctions based on student performance. Measured on a standardized scale (M=0, SD=1), the differences between the school groups are substantial—more than 1.5 SD for the elementary schools and more than 2 SD for the middle and high schools (Figure 1).

Accountability in the UNS schools reflects the environmental conditions teachers experience in one urban school district located in a state that currently exerts intense pressures on its districts to boost performance. The SRS schools, reflecting conditions in many states (16) and districts (22), as a group represented a heterogeneous and less concentrated policy context. Moreover, the SRS schools participated in the study during the early 1990s, when the accountability movement was just beginning to gain the momentum.

Participative decision making

Based on the participative decision making index comprising measures of teacher influence on school policy, decisions concerning their work lives, and decisions over students' school experience, teachers in the SRS schools exercise more influence in their schools than do the teachers in the UNS. The pattern is consistent at all grade levels, with the magnitude of difference about the same, more than .7 SD. Because the SRS research we noted earlier has shown that teachers' participation in decision making is critical to their work as a professional community, to taking collective

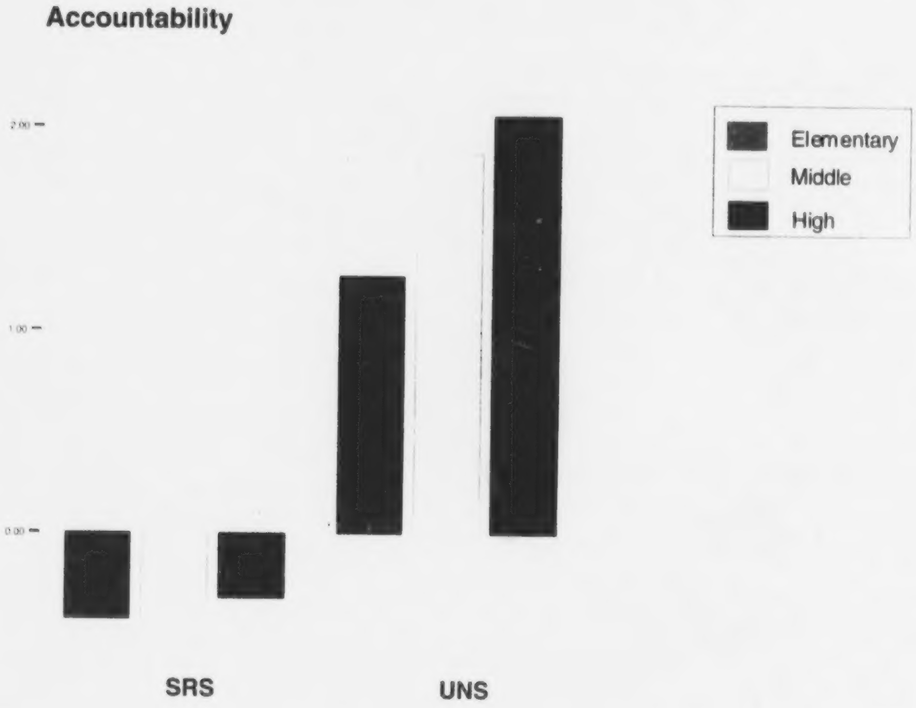


FIGURE 1
Accountability in SRS and UNS Schools Compared by Grade Level

responsibility for student learning, and to organizational learning—all of which have demonstrated a positive relationship with student achievement, the low levels of influence among the teachers in UNS schools raises concern.

Low scores of the UNS schools on participative decision making may be due to principals' lack of willingness to accept influence from teachers as well as to district polices and practices that hold principals ultimately responsible for students' test scores. Principals receive raises if their school improves on the proficiency test and they face transfer to another assignment if the school fails to improve. Because principals stand to gain or lose substantially by their school's performance, they may choose to maintain tight control over school decisions (Figure 2).

Shared Commitment and Collaborative Activity

Operationalizing the construct for this analysis are *professional community* and *collective responsibility for student learning*. We examine each of these separately.

The comparative levels of *professional community* in the SRS and UNS schools represent a departure from the pattern observed in the two pre-

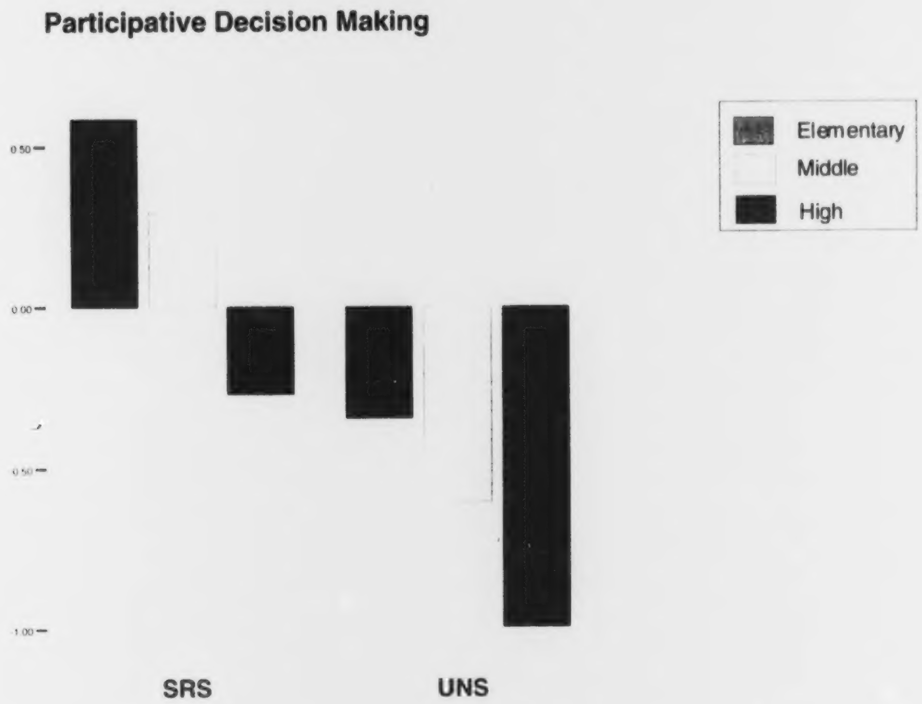


FIGURE 2
Participative Decision Making in SRS and UNS Schools Compared by Grade Level

ceding analyses. While professional community is stronger in the SRS schools overall, the elementary schools in both groups report about the same measure of community. SRS middle schools rank above their UNS counterparts, but the reported lack of professional community in the UNS high schools is striking (Figure 3).

What accounts for the comparatively high level of professional community in the UNS elementary schools? Disaggregating the *professional community* index helped to explain these schools' higher -than- expected score. While the SRS elementary schools score somewhat higher than the UNS schools on shared purpose, focus on student learning, reflective dialogue, and deprivatized practice, the UNS schools score considerably higher on collaborative activity (.3 SD higher). We attribute this difference to the impact of the new reading programs in the elementary schools and the facilitative work of the literacy coordinators. Both these factors may be leading the UNS elementary school teachers to work together. Compared to the SRS middle and high schools in which the majority of faculty at least coalesced around the common effort at restructuring, the UNS secondary schools and their teachers lacked any shared focus, a factor that may account for their low scores.

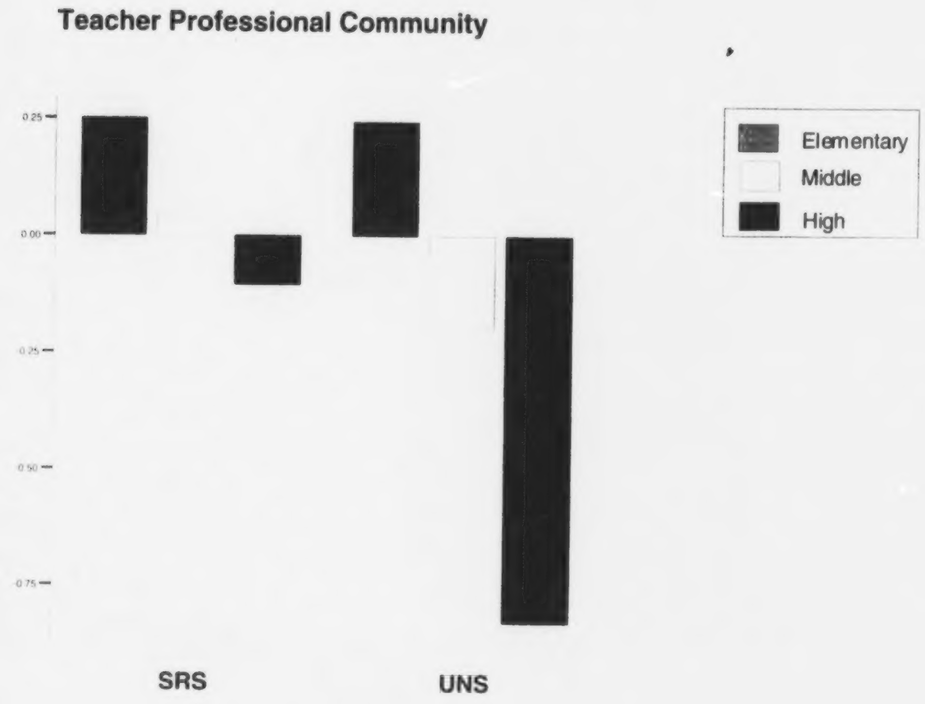


FIGURE 3
Professional Community in SRS and UNS Schools Compared by Grade Level

SRS schools score higher than the UNS schools on *collective responsibility for student learning*, especially at the elementary and middle school levels. The SRS elementary schools evidenced many collective endeavors, including school-wide curriculum planning, integrating school-wide reform models, team teaching, teacher-led staff development. Engaging in such efforts broadened the view of teachers from their individual classroom or group of students to a larger group, sometimes as large as the entire school.

When teachers plan collectively, they are likely to discuss the conflicting values inherent in different policies and educational goals. In the process, teachers can learn to look beyond particular mandates to more fundamental learning goals for students and can develop strategies to help students reach those goals. Collaborating in this way, teachers can reduce anxiety about how particular state or district policies might impact their teaching and their students' learning. The Fourth Grade Reading Guarantee, for example, frustrated teachers and principals in the UNS elementary schools. Unfortunately, staff tended to focus on the unfairness of the policy rather than consider potential benefits of identifying reading deficiencies early and addressing them immediately.

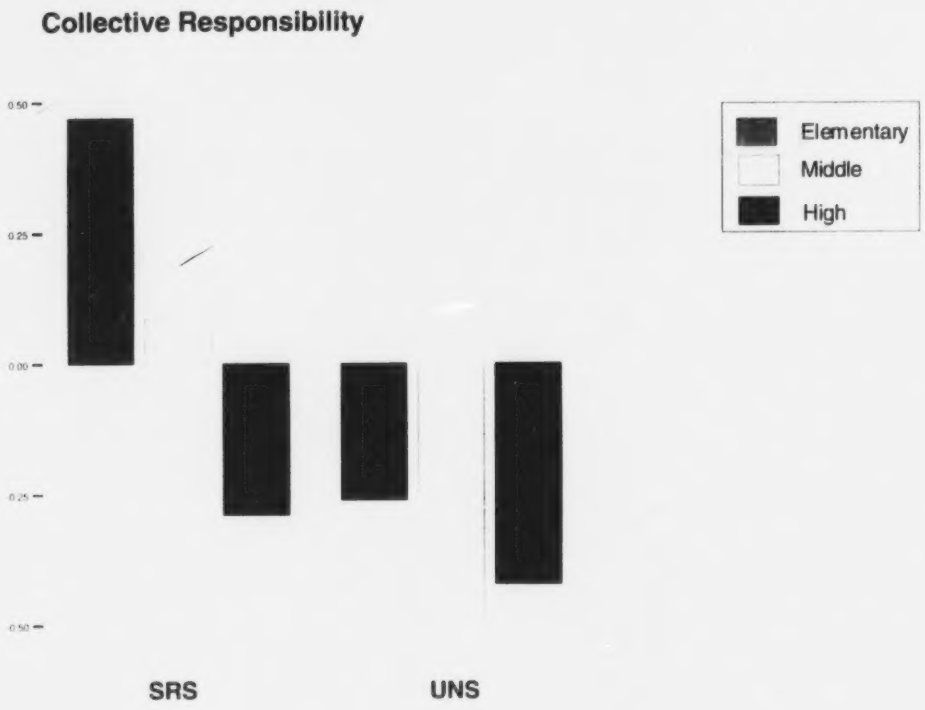


FIGURE 4
Collective Responsibility for Student Learning in SRS and UNS Schools Compared by Grade Level

Knowledge and skills

Teachers in the UNS elementary schools reported more favorably on their professional development than teachers in any other group, even their SRS elementary school peers. Because so much of the professional development in UNS elementary schools pertained to teachers' implementation of the new reading programs and the reading needs of their student, the result could be expected. The perceptions of the UNS middle and high school teachers on the usefulness of the professional development they experienced differed markedly—both from their UNS elementary school colleagues and their SRS counterparts (Figure 5).

Even when an in-service purports to deal with a school's specific needs, teachers may find the experience misses the mark. At one UNS high school, for example, the staff felt unable to focus on academic improvement until they solved some basic, organizational problems. To address this need, the administration brought in outside experts with a program to achieve school wide consistency in managing student discipline. The

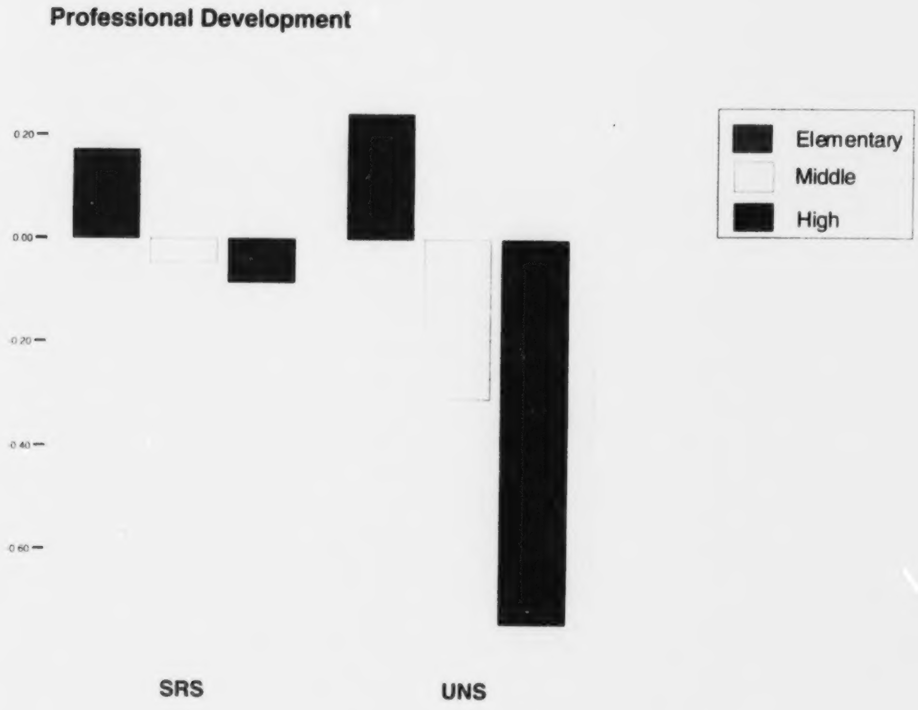


FIGURE 5
Professional Development in SRS and UNS Schools
Compared by Grade Level

experts launched the initiative with a day of in-service to explain the strategies and to generate staff buy-in. According to case study notes, the experts did not adjust the program for use in an urban, secondary school, much less customize it for the specific school site. Because of their participation in a related umbrella initiative, the staff felt compelled to vote to adopt the program. However, they lacked genuine commitment to it. If the teaching staff had been involved in planning and delivering the in-service, they would have been able to tailor it to their school's needs.

Leadership

Both the UNS and SRS elementary school teachers found their leaders more supportive than did the teachers in the secondary schools (Figure 6). While the SRS secondary teachers were mildly unenthusiastic about their leadership, on average, the UNS teachers reported negatively on their leaders. Based on the teachers' perceptions, the UNS administrators demonstrated relatively little support and encouragement, little openness to innovation and new ideas, and little influence on school reform.

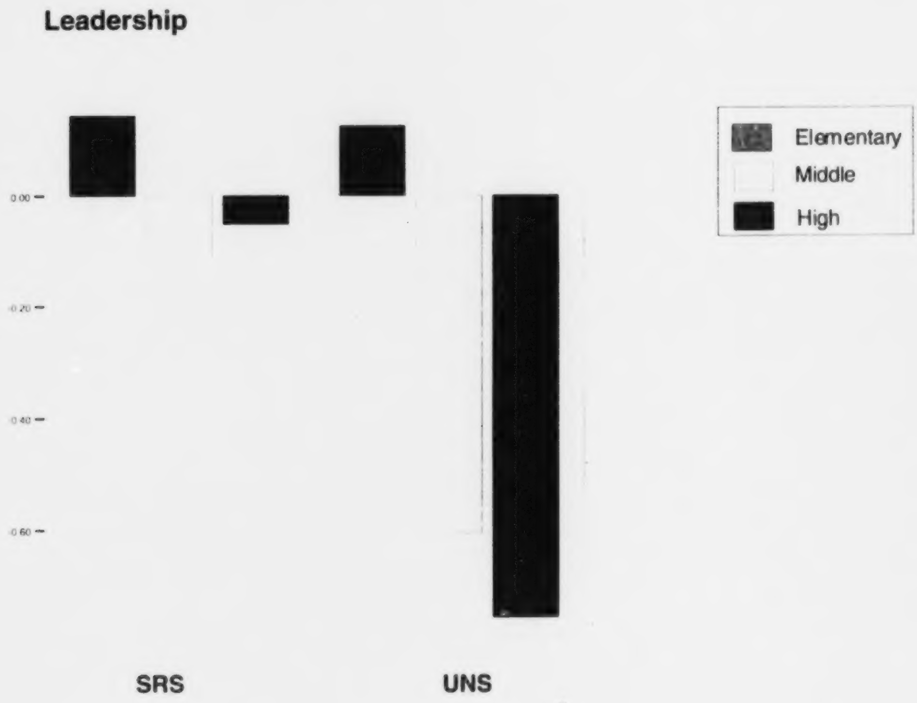


FIGURE 6
Leadership in SRS and UNS Schools Compared by Grade Level

Rather than leading for organizational change and development by enlisting teachers in a common effort, the principals in the UNS schools tended to maintain close control over their school programs, as these schools' low scores on participative decision making and collective responsibility suggested. Organizational learning requires the leadership to empower stakeholders at all levels of an organization. UNS leaders could accomplish this by engaging members in using their knowledge to solve organizational problems, valuing their efforts, communicating that value, and supporting members as they work on change initiatives.

For example, to reframe the in-service problem described above into an opportunity, the principal could turn the imported discipline program over to the faculty and staff of the school for overhaul. If the staff worked collaboratively with ongoing support from the principal, they could customize packaged components to fit the school's needs. In so doing, the members would probably contribute to a more positive school environment and develop skills to become more effective in later SCIP work. If the staff were to influence school policy in this way and begin to learn collectively, they could experience an emergent sense of professional community.

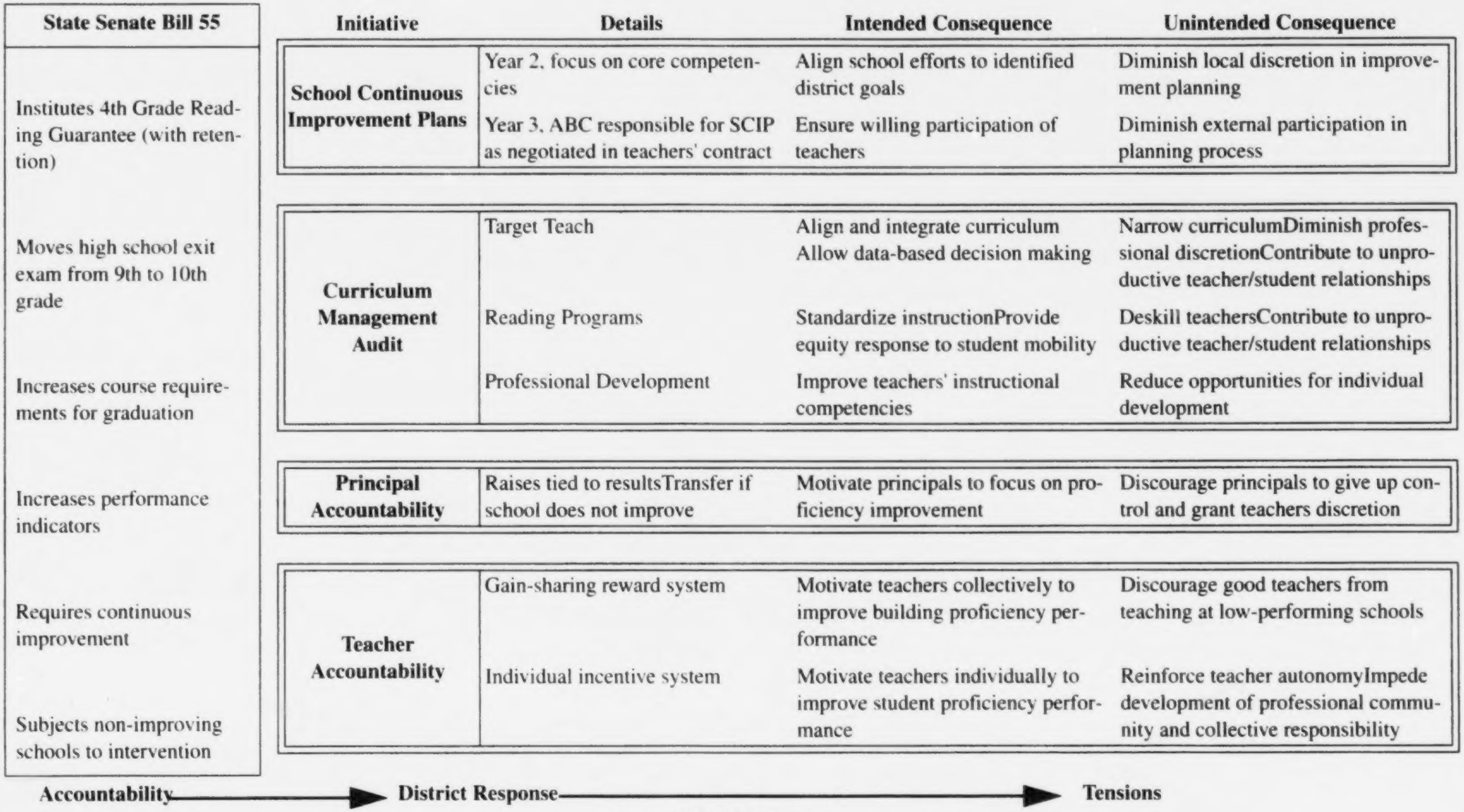
The Unintended Consequences of State and District Accountability Policies

Returning to the state policies for accountability that dictate rigorous performance standards to school districts, we offer a perspective on the unintended consequences that have resulted from the steps one urban school district took to move its schools toward improved performance. While the intended consequences represent changes the district made to show performance results according to the state's short time table, the unintended consequences appear to undermine school's potential for developing the capacity for organizational learning. Figure 7 summarizes the key provisions of Senate Bill 55 and the urban district's improvement initiatives, followed by the intended and unintended consequences to each district policy.

The evolution of the SCIP process charted in an earlier section began when the district moved to align schools' planning in Year 2 with its own. While the step seemed a common sense way to make the SCIP process more orderly, it diminished local discretion in improvement planning. Teachers, parents, and community members who had invested their energies in the planning process soon lost enthusiasm for continuing on the SCIP teams.

The Curriculum Management Audit called attention to problems in the district, but the superintendent and central staff welcomed its guidance and the support the audit provided for district goals. Recognizing the importance of curriculum alignment and the use of data for instructional decision making, they adopted the Target Teach program to assist teachers. Teachers regarded the program as oppressive and limiting to their professional discretion. While the research-based reading programs offered a promising means to standardize reading instruction in ways that would benefit students, teachers found their own creativity and craft knowledge threatened. The district provided specific professional development opportunities to assist teachers in improving their instruction, but adopting common content reduced opportunities for teachers to develop in ways they perceived as useful.

To motivate principals to improve performance in their schools, the district proposed a set of incentives and sanctions. In so doing the district may have influenced principals to attend to proficiency test issues, but it indirectly discouraged principals from involving teachers in school decisions, a strategy that is counter-productive to building a collaborative school culture (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000). Similarly, the gain-sharing reward system appeared to be a way of motivating teachers to work together, but it had the adverse effect of turning good teachers away from low-performing schools. A more recent individual incentive system of large bonuses, threat-



State Senate Bill 55

- Institutes 4th Grade Reading Guarantee (with retention)
- Moves high school exit exam from 9th to 10th grade
- Increases course requirements for graduation
- Increases performance indicators
- Requires continuous improvement
- Subjects non-improving schools to intervention

Initiative	Details	Intended Consequence	Unintended Consequence
School Continuous Improvement Plans	Year 2, focus on core competencies	Align school efforts to identified district goals	Diminish local discretion in improvement planning
	Year 3, ABC responsible for SCIP as negotiated in teachers' contract	Ensure willing participation of teachers	Diminish external participation in planning process
Curriculum Management Audit	Target Teach	Align and integrate curriculum Allow data-based decision making	Narrow curriculumDiminish professional discretionContribute to unproductive teacher/student relationships
	Reading Programs	Standardize instructionProvide equity response to student mobility	Deskill teachersContribute to unproductive teacher/student relationships
	Professional Development	Improve teachers' instructional competencies	Reduce opportunities for individual development
Principal Accountability	Raises tied to resultsTransfer if school does not improve	Motivate principals to focus on proficiency improvement	Discourage principals to give up control and grant teachers discretion
Teacher Accountability	Gain-sharing reward system	Motivate teachers collectively to improve building proficiency performance	Discourage good teachers from teaching at low-performing schools
	Individual incentive system	Motivate teachers individually to improve student proficiency performance	Reinforce teacher autonomyImpede development of professional community and collective responsibility

FIGURE 7

District Response to State Accountability Policy: Unintended Consequences and Resulting Tensions ens to reinforce teachers' individualism, rather than professional community and collective responsibility for student learning.

Organizational Learning and High Stakes Accountability: Some Lessons

When high-stakes accountability policies pressure urban school districts to improve, will organizational learning be hindered within the district's schools? Our study of the UNS schools has been instructive in investigating that question. The district's push on its schools to show quick improvement entailed control, standardization, and threat of sanctions. These strategies tend to work against organizational learning.

Based on our work with the UNS schools, we draw the following lessons:

1. *Providing schools with data does not guarantee that they will learn from it.* Organizational learning cannot happen without data, but the data, which states provide through school report cards, are not sufficient for schools' needs. Performance indicators focus almost exclusively on achievement and, with the exception of attendance data, provide no information on other student outcomes or on school factors that influence performance. While the limited number and types of indicators are attractive to states because they are comparatively easy to generate, they are too narrow to reflect a full complement of valued educational outcomes. Moreover, because educational technologies are complex and uncertain (Cohen, March & Olsen, 1972), they are not amenable to analysis by simplistic indicator systems. Teachers, administrators, and site councils who may benefit from such information do not always have the skill or the motivation to seek a fuller understanding of the data or to use the data honestly (Ogawa & Collom, 2000; David, 1988).

   Beyond the report card data, the district supplies schools with other forms of data. Target Teach data allow teachers to monitor closely the effectiveness of instruction and the learning of students. According to district literacy coordinators with whom we spoke, principals set the tone on the use of these data. Thus, practices vary widely from school to school. The district also coordinates the administration of yearly surveys to teachers, parents, and students at each school as a gauge of attitudes and perceptions toward various aspects of that school and their experience of it. Although the district makes these data available to each administrator, we saw no evidence of their use for school improvement purposes.

   Successful organizations employ many methods of examining evaluation data about their performance and then make needed changes in procedures or technologies. When assisted in developing the capacity for reflective evaluation of data, schools can learn to take primary responsibility for their own improvement (Earl and Lee, 1998). Schools can become data driven by choice—actively seeking external standards data to test and extend their performance—once they have begun to experience success with "assessment literacy" (Fullan, 1999; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). While the UNS schools have not yet had this success, professional development in the areas of assessment literacy and in the use of data for organizational learning may help them to move in that direction..

2. *A district can enhance school opportunities to learn when it maintains a balance between too little structure and too much structure.* The Phi Delta Kappa Curriculum Audit concluded that the district had provided too little structure to support its decentralized schools. The district responded to these findings by standardizing reading, aligning curriculum and assessment through Target Teach, and developing comprehensive curriculum and pacing guides. Principals were expected to adhere closely to new policies. Before the PDK Audit, schools were thought to falter because school principals operated decentralized sites with little district guidance and support. After the audit, the district eliminated school autonomy in areas such as curriculum through tight district control.

   Neither situation promotes organizational learning. Organizational learning requires creative tension between too much and too little structure. Too much structure produces a rule-following culture with rigid processes and hierarchical channels of communication (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1998). Too little structure leads to rule breaking, loose relationships and unrealized potential. Studies of the Chicago schools since 1994 show that improvement is more likely when schools strike a balance between too little structure and too much. Decentralized schools need the district to provide a clear policy framework, support for capacity building, and external accountability (Bryk et al., 1998; Fullan, 1999).

3. *The principal is the key to a school's development of the capacity to learn.* Just as a district policy structure can offer too little guidance or too much direction, so too the principal must balance the level of control he or she exerts. Principals hold ultimate responsibility for school success or failure in the accountability environment. Because they are subject to the threat of transfer and school reconstitution, principals resist giving over some control to teachers. Based on differences in their belief systems, principals may construe and respond to situations differently—as a problem to solve unilaterally or as an opportunity for organizational learning (Krug, 1992). To foster a learning orientation, principals trust their teachers to participate fully in solving the problem, finding an appropriate course

of action and carrying out the decision. By collaborating to learn their way to solutions, principals and teachers build mutual and organizational trust.

Principals shape a participative culture by making it clear that they expect teachers to bring their opinions and ideas to a forum for collegial discussion, where they may influence others and be subject to influence. When mutual influence becomes an authentic part of a school culture, control does not diminish as the principal gives it up. Rather, control enlarges far beyond the degree any one person could maintain alone, as it flows within multiple relationships among school members.

4. *Coherence and stability result from teachers' professional community.* A UNS elementary school offers evidence that learning organizations can exist in urban school districts and that they can survive even internal turbulence such as administrative changes. In the last four years, the UNS elementary school has had three principals. Because these reassignments were the result of factors other than poor performance or lack of improvement, they do not point to organizational inadequacies. Nevertheless, the persistence of a productive community culture in the face of these administrative changes suggests the power of collaboration and the durability of professional community. This UNS elementary school has established an enduring identity – one shared by teachers and principal, parents, students, and alumni. The school draws on social and human resources from its extended community. These have buttressed the school, to some extent, in members' desire to maintain an authentic approach to pedagogy and assessment in the face of accountability pressures.
5. *External incentives may constrain organizational learning.* Incentives policies can conflict with organizational learning in two ways. First, in proposing the incentive, the district and the union imply that students' low-test performance is due to a lack of will on the part of educators (Earl & Torrance, 2000). Second, if the district and union direct the incentive toward individual teachers, rather than toward the school staff, they spur individualistic activities rather than collaborative ones. The incentive policy fails to view the problem as resulting from a lack of particular pedagogical expertise or from a lack of organizational capacity—both starting points for organizational learning.

A gain-sharing incentive, rewarding the school rather than an individual, may motivate the organization to improve. While the individual incentive might attract good teachers to low-performing schools, such an incentive will reinforce teachers' inclination toward isolated practice rather than shared professionalism. Thus, motivation originating outside the school can erode professional community or work against its emergence. When teachers' motivation originates inside the school, as teachers and administrators create site-specific standards, their collaboration around accountability can affect teaching directly (Newmann, King & Rigdon, 1997).

6. *High-stakes testing policies have unintended consequences for interaction between teachers and students in schools.* Determining what knowledge and competencies students should master to advance in school perennially challenges educators. In high-stakes accountability environments, these decisions come from sources external to the schools—from legislators, administrators, board members, business consortia, and others. Under the banner of equity or efficiency, these external agents employ "neutral" measures of resources and outputs, such as standardized test scores, to judge success (Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985). The Ohio legislature mandated an accountability system that ranks schools almost exclusively on student test scores. Because the curriculum management audit found the district educational program neither equitable nor effective, the district standardized the elementary and middle school curricula with the help of outside experts. The constant pressure of proficiency testing, according to the principals and teachers we interviewed, prevents teachers from providing the kinds of educational experiences they know students need and deserve.

When legal-rational sources—through tests, standards, curriculum guidelines, and external experts—determine what constitutes an effective instructional program, teachers have lost their legitimate authority (Elmore, 1987). Distant and impersonal educational forces can thwart local efforts to set clear goals and high expectations for students, to make key decisions based on local needs, and to engage in challenging academic work (Purkey & Smith, 1985). Such a situation is "antithetical to teachers' and students' assuming responsibility for learning" (Elmore, p. 69).

Classroom instruction and learning depend on the willingness of the student to accept the teacher's legitimate authority (Metz, 1993). When they practice in a culture of authority that encourages student learning, teachers with a well-developed sense of what to teach and how to teach enjoy student consent as a result of expert knowledge and skill (Elmore, 1987). Because external mandates in high-stakes accountability environments undermine teachers' legitimate authority, however, they reduce the potential for rich interactions between adults and students. When teachers consent to the mandates, that is, when they tacitly or explicitly say, "I don't make the rules, I just do what I have to do," they become agents of those mandates and give up some of their classroom authority.

Lacking legitimate authority based on knowledge and engagement in significant work, teachers turn to coercion or exchange tactics to manage the classroom (Elmore, 1987). Students recognize the absence of legitimate authority and react to it. By disengaging from school, participating in youth counter cultures, disrupting class, or withdrawing from participation, students express their recognition of the oppressive situation and their displeasure. Alienating teachers from the production of knowledge and shifting instructional decisions to external experts remove the only source of legitimate influence that bears directly on teaching and learning (Elmore, 1987). The lack of legitimate authority based in professional expertise disadvantages teachers and denies students opportunities for educational engagement.

7. *When high-stakes accountability systems are in constant flux, the resulting change and ambiguities frustrate educators. Somewhat paradoxically, however, change and ambiguity can stimulate organizational learning to improve school performance.* Keeping up with changes in a state's accountability system can frustrate and confound the efforts of any individual educator. Because state decisions lack sensitivity to local contexts (Mickethwait & Woodridge, 1996), they may result in unrealistic timelines, rules, and paperwork, creating fragmentation and incoherence at the school level (Fullan, 1999). Such incoherence may actually divert energy away from school improvement by pushing teachers into isolation rather than collaboration. Facing contradictory expectations, individual teachers may close the classroom door in frustration and not try at all, or they may close the classroom door and try harder, doing more of what they have always done.
8. *Organizational learning for school improvement requires a communal sense of urgency.* Businesses that adopt a learning orientation do so as a result of a compelling need to deliver quality products and services, and to do so quickly. If schools responded in a similar way, the persistent failure of UNS students, coupled with their social and economic disadvantage, would create an immediate sense of urgency. Ironically, schools use socioeconomic status to excuse the lack of student progress (Fullan, 1999). As one elementary principal put it:

> The challenges are that the children—the attendance of children, and the shape in which they come to school. Many kids come to school and they don't know anything. For instance, kindergarten children come like a blank piece of paper, don't know name, number, they don't know anything. And we have to take them from that point and try to get them to the point of proficiency test, and that is real difficult. This year we had two kindergartners coming in at seven that hadn't been to school before, so that's real hard.

For a sense of urgency to develop and for schools to then engage in organizational learning grounded in urgency, every school stakeholder needs the opportunity to join a public dialogue about schools. While the dialogue would likely contain the cacophony of disparate opinions, conflict, and resistance, these dynamics are necessary forces for success. Interaction is essential to solving problems, according to organizational learning theory, and diversity is key to discovering moral and effective solutions in a complex and ambiguous environment.

When the district required schools to include parents and community members on SCIP teams, schools invited outside and sometimes diverse voices to join the dialogue. When the district removed that requirement and shifted SCIP responsibilities to the ABCs, they lowered the chances that community members would participate. In so doing, they diminished an opportunity for urgency to develop.

CONCLUSION

The high-stakes accountability environment applies pressure on the UNS schools in terms of publicity, rewards and sanctions, and consequences for students. Ironically, in view of the intense accountability pressures that impact them, teachers in the UNS schools regard themselves as uninvolved in school decision-making, lacking influence over curriculum and instruction, school-wide policies, and work-life concerns. Because principals are subject to rewards or sanctions from the district based on their school's performance, they tend to allow little leeway for alternative views, experimentation, and innovation. District policies on curriculum alignment and the pacing of instruction aim at standardizing classroom processes. Because control over the curriculum resides with outside experts, and because the curriculum focuses narrowly on the proficiency tests, teachers have little need to come together to shape the school-wide instructional program. Guided by the findings of the Phi Delta Kappa Curriculum Management Audit, the district strengthened its policy structure to ensure greater equity for students, but, in so doing, sharply limited local decision making.

While they are accountable for student success, UNS teachers have few or no opportunities to influence policies that regulate their interactions with students. Nonetheless, several UNS schools had some elements of professional community. The faculty at one UNS high school has in common a relatively strong focus on student learning. Teachers at an elementary school scored especially high on shared purpose. Whether reflecting the influence of a long-standing tradition or a recent initiative, these strengths could represent a starting point for professional community. Because of several other factors—the accountability pressure on all school members; the short time lines allowed for substantial change; the lack of policy support; the reliance on external motivation; and the tendency of principals to retain control—professional community will probably not flourish in the UNS schools in the near future.

Also unlikely to flourish is a sense of collective responsibility for student learning shared among schoolteachers. Without the opportunity to shape their instructional program, teachers will not experience the power of professional collaboration and shared engagement. The socioeconomic disadvantage most UNS students experience undoubtedly challenges the best efforts of teachers and administrators. Without the urgency that comes from realizing that every adult in the school is responsible for every student's success, however, school improvement will be incremental at best and nonexistent at worst. The disadvantages of students will remain as excuses, outside the realm of school influences; and school members will accept the *status quo* in the face of daunting challenges.

Just one UNS school, an alternative elementary school, appears strong in its capacity for organizational learning. Its teachers report high levels of influence and professional community, and its students are relatively high achieving. Another UNS elementary school, having just changed to a year-round schedule, can build on the sense of purpose the staff shares as they make sense of the instructional challenges the new structure presents. Other UNS schools have isolated strengths, but the mix of state and district policies currently constrain local efforts for professional development and school improvement.

In short, accountability strategies enacted at multiple points in the system are intended to enhance instruction through standardization of curriculum and provision of data, to improve professional development by concentrating efforts on reading and math in alignment with district goals, and to boost student achievement. While these strategies may achieve short-term objectives important to managing a large urban school district, they simultaneously constrain local discretion to direct a course for improvement, impede the development of professional community and collective responsibility, and reinforce unproductive relationships between teachers and students.

NOTES

1. A grant from the Committee on Urban Affairs at The Ohio State University provided support for this project in 1999-2000. The SRS data are drawn from a study conducted under the auspices of the Wisconsin Center for Education Research and the Center on the Organization and Restructuring of Schools, and supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (Grant No. R117Q000005-95). The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the supporting agencies.

2. Perspectives on organizational learning have come from various disciplines, including cognitive psychology, sociology, organization studies, organizational development and management. Various streams of literature concern the nature of knowledge (March & Olsen, 1976; Argyris & Schon, 1978; Nonanka & Takeuchi, 1995; Hutchins, 1991), characteristics of adult learning (Mezirow, 1994; Merriam, 1987; Dixon, 1999), processes for learning (Watkins & Marsick, 1993; March, 1991; DiBella & Nevis, 1998; Weick & Westley, 1996), cycles of learning (Land & Jarman, 1992; Tushman & Romanelli, 1985; Nadler & Tushman, 1995; Van de Ven et al., 1999) and learning dysfunctions (Argyris & Schon, 1996). These literatures are often integrated in the practice oriented, prescriptive literature of the learning organization (Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 1994; Senge et al., 1999; Senge et al., 2000).

3. In March 2001, The Ohio Legislature passed Senate Bill 1 to replace the current system for testing students. The legislation, taking effect in the 2001-2002 school year, calls for the development of clear academic standards and for phasing in achievement examinations, aligned with the standards, to replace proficiency tests.

4. Each SRS school was the focus of study for a single year. A team of SRS researchers visited the school for a week in the fall and a week in the spring to observe and evaluate instruction in target classes; interview teachers, administrators, district personnel, students, parents, and community members; attend school meetings; and, in general, to participate in the life of the school. In addition to the survey of teachers, the SRS collected demographic and other school data and surveyed all students from one grade level in each to collect data on their classroom and school experiences.

5. After initially agreeing to participate in the benchmarking survey, the administrator of one school declined to ask "the teachers to do one more thing."

6. The capacity items used in the SRS studies of organizational learning incorporated items from the coding reports of the 24 schools, data not available for the UNS schools.

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CHAPTER 2

SOURCES OF VICTORY, SEEDS OF DEFEAT
Linking Enactment Politics and Implementation Developments

Donna Redmond Jones and Betty Malen[1]

This article uses a political-institutional lens to examine how the politics of enactment may affect policy implementation. In so doing, the authors draw upon a particular case, the enactment and implementation of a district-mandated reconstitution reform. Findings suggest that political strategies that rely upon insider dynamics may foster successful enactment of radical, redistributive reforms, but may simultaneously undermine efforts to implement policy. The article identifies pathways through which enactment politics may influence implementation developments.

Academics, policy actors and education leaders have long recognized but reluctantly admitted that schools are political systems (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). As such, they are compelled to address the "dual challenge" of conflict management and institutional legitimation (Weiler, 1993) as well as the basic problem of organizational performance. Theoretically, a school system's attempts to regulate conflict and replenish legitimacy can complement (as well as counteract) their attempts to improve performance (Rowan & Miskel, 1999). But determining whether and how an educational system might enact and implement policies that individually or collectively attend to all three critical functions remains a persistent and perplexing puzzle.

Efforts to address this puzzle suggest that education policymaking is often more fully and fairly captured by conceptual perspectives that focus on political-institutional models of decision making rather than on classic rational choice frameworks (Hess, 1999a; Malen, Ogawa & Kranz, 1990; Cuban, 1990; Ogawa, 1993). Yet, since the publication of the seminal works that document how education policymaking at the district level is frequently, if not inevitably, political in character (e.g., Peterson, 1976, see Boyd, 1976 for a review), few studies have examined the politics of policy enactment and implementation in this arena (Burlingame, 1988; Malen, 1994; Hess, 1999a, McLeese, 1991). The recent series of cases that focus on the development of social capital and "civic capacity" in urban settings (Stone, 1998; Orr, 1999; Henig, et.al 1999; Portz, Stein & Jones, 1999) and the decentralization and re-centralization reforms in Chicago (e.g., Shipps, 1997, 1998) are notable and welcome exceptions.

Other writings, such as profiles of the superintendency shed light on the political pressures that confront incumbents of this position and their responses to them (Cuban, 1976; Scott, 1980; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Johnson, 1996). Studies that concentrate on the properties that make some policy alternatives politically attractive to district officials despite the uncertainties surrounding their educational merits, are also instructive (Hess, 1999a, 1999b; Malen, 1994). Despite these caveats, systematic investigations of the politics of policy enactment and implementation at the local level are still relatively scarce. Efforts to explore how the politics of enactment may affect the politics of implementation are even more rare (Malen, 1994; Henig, et. al, 1999). This article addresses these gaps in the literature.

PURPOSE AND APPROACH

Our primary purpose is to illustrate and interpret how the politics of enacting an education reform may affect its implementation. To do so, we draw upon a special case, the enactment and implementation of a district mandated reconstitution reform. We focus on a reconstitution reform because such radical, redistributive policies[2] are hard to enact, particularly in subsystem arenas (Mazzoni, 1986,1991; Polsby, 1984; House, 1974). Generally speaking, reconstitution initiatives remove a school's incumbent administrators and teachers (or large percentages of them) and replace them with educators who, presumably, are more capable and committed (Malen, et al., 1999). Whether instituted through a court-ordered corrective, a state-driven mandate or a district-sponsored decree, reconstitution initiatives boldly and publicly challenge prevailing conventions, overturn existing arrangements, redefine responsibilities and, in so doing, reallocate credit and blame.[3] In subsystem arenas such as the ones lodged at the district level, deeply rooted traditions of incremental decision making and broadly held views about occupational survival often prompt superintendents and other district officials to select and enact policies that will "attract... notice" but not engender conflict, especially in the "professional and local communities" that comprise the district (Hess, 1999a: 459).

Given these tendencies, the successful enactment of a volatile initiative like reconstitution, and, in this instance, the fitful implementation of it, constitute an especially telling case, well-suited to the generation of analytic insights regarding the "politics" of education reform (Weiler, 1982; 1993). Following a brief description of the study and the initiative, we describe the insider politics that led to successful enactment, illustrate how that dynamic shaped implementation processes and policy outcomes, and discuss the implications of this analysis for our understanding of the relationship between enactment politics and implementation developments.

THE STUDY OF REFORM ENACTMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

The decision to enact a reconstitution reform was examined as part of a larger study[4] that mapped the enactment and implementation of this initiative (Finkelstein, et al. 2000). The conceptual framework that guided the research on policy enactment combined elements of political systems perspectives with political behavior constructs (Mazzoni, 1991b; 1986). The systems lens views policymaking as a dynamic process through which inputs, including demands for responses to new and old issues, are converted into outputs, including formal policy decisions and administrative regulations. It directs attention to the contextual forces that galvanize pressures and govern decision processes by shaping the opportunity structure in which actors deliberate and decide policy. It seeks to uncover the institutional features and environmental forces that both shape actors' conceptions of problems, priorities, and possibilities and condition their responses to them. The behavioral lens posits that actors "are not simply molded by institutional forces" (Portz, et al. 1999:23). Thus it seeks to untangle the intricacies of human interactions that affect policy decisions by arraying the actors' goals, power resources and influence strategies. Taken together, these relatively open-ended perspectives elicit and organize information about the incentives for action, the interplay of influence among interdependent actors, and the manner in which context situates and mediates those interactions.

The process of implementation was examined through ongoing documentation of district efforts to institute this reform and through exploratory case studies of school-level responses to it at three of the six reconstituted schools. The aim was to understand how site actors, namely principals, teachers, and parents reacted to this reform and how district officials were (or were not) responding to the issues that surfaced throughout implementation.

In order to map reform developments across levels of the system and across stages of the process (from the initial adoption through the first two years of implementation) an interdisciplinary research team, which included the authors, collected documentary, interview and observational data on multiple aspects of the reconstitution initiative. This article draws on a subset of this database. We use press releases, an array of state, district and site documents (e.g., policy statements, meeting minutes, descriptions and evaluations of district initiatives), and other print materials (e.g., actor correspondence) to portray the context, clarify policy provisions, and correct or corroborate information secured through interviews. We rely heavily on data acquired from over 330 formal and informal interviews with top-level district administrators, building administrators, board members, teacher union representatives, classroom teachers, program specialists and support staff who were in positions to know how this reform was selected, authorized, and instituted. These data were augmented by information secured at research team meetings with district level officials and principals of the reconstituted schools. Multiple checks for bias and error in the collection, analysis and communication of data were incorporated. [5]

Although our research capitalized on multiple sources of data collected over an extended time period, there are limitations. First, the interview pool was educator-dominated. This construction meant that we talked with individuals who were in the best position to know how the reform was enacted and how it was being implemented in the schools, but we did not talk with a broad, cross-section of parents and community residents or the full slate of local and state officials who had an interest in this initiative. Our primary data regarding parent and community responses are from a relatively small number of persons who were involved, often as volunteers in the schools. These data are augmented by educator descriptions of parent and community reactions. Our conversations with select but key government officials, along with our reviews of official correspondence and documents, produced a substantial amount of data but other state and local officials whom we did not interview may have offered additional or different information.

Second, many individuals said they were comfortable talking with us, but others were reluctant to be interviewed, especially at the school site. [6] Thus we cannot be entirely confident that we got the "whole story" from all informants even though we secured detailed and on face candid data from most.

Third, in order to protect the anonymity of study sites, we describe the policy context and, at times, reform effects (e.g., impact on teacher turnover) in narrative terms rather than through numerical profiles. We recognize that some narrative characterizations may be less precise than readers might prefer but we deliberately sacrifice specificity where more detailed information could be used to trace the identity of study sites.

Fourth, the study did not seek to explain how reconstitution came to be a prominent feature of reform in the larger, state and national context. The study sought only to gauge how this condition, along with other broad contextual forces may have affected district-level dynamics and decisions.

Finally, the study design does not permit firm generalizations. Rather, it supports provisional interpretations that can be revised, refuted, or reinforced through further research.

ENACTING RECONSTITUTION REFORM

The enactment stage (from the inception of the idea to the announcement of the initiative) was brief, encompassing about a ten-week period, from mid-March to June 1, 1997. The following synopsis summarizes the policy provisions and describes the contextual forces and process dynamics that led to the enactment of the superintendent's proposal.

REFORM PROVISIONS

Cast as the first step of a new, determined effort to "redesign" low-performing schools in the district, the reconstitution initiative was confined to four elementary and two middle schools (a small percentage of the district's low-performing schools). This small-scale initiative embodied sweeping changes for the six schools that were immediately affected and warning signs for other sites that might be "redesigned" in subsequent years. New principals were appointed in five of the six schools. Teachers who wanted to continue to work in those schools, no matter their experience, preference or history, had to

1. reapply for their position,
2. sit for a formal interview with a committee comprised of the new principal, district administrators and/or intermediate level administrators, and
3. accept the verdict of that selection committee.

Displaced teachers were guaranteed other positions within the district. Staff members who wanted to retain their posts in these schools also had to go through re-selection processes. The district asked all employees hired at the reconstituted schools to make a three-year commitment to the school and to attend special staff development meetings prior to the opening of school as well as during the first year of the reform. The district pledged to support this initiative for three years, at which time the superintendent expected to see remarkable patterns of improvement.

The stated purpose of this initiative was to "transform" the six schools and establish "models of school improvement" for the district and state, and, with luck, for other school systems nationwide. In formal documents, the superintendent stated:

> It is my hope that teachers and support staff will...examine other programs for alternative solutions to solve problems; that they will willingly risk `breaking the mold' to pose unique and inventive solutions to problems.

To accomplish these ambitious goals, the superintendent envisioned a school improvement process that, as publicized in district documents,

a. involved school staff in the design and implementation of new programs;
b. provided unprecedented professional development opportunities;
c. engaged the community in discussions of school priorities and practices;
d. promoted innovation and encouraged alternative solutions to school problems;
e. was supported by all individuals in the school system;
f. used empirical data to evaluate programs and practices; and
g. focused on the best interests of children.

When the reform was launched, the district created an office comprised of three individuals who were to assist site personnel and earmarked $1.2 million from existing resources, to support the office, staff development programs and school improvement initiatives.

REFORM CONTEXT

Like many large, metropolitan school districts, this district has been under intense stress emanating from various sources, but most notably from dramatic changes in the student population and in the regulatory actions of governmental agencies. During the 1990's, the student body became a complex mix of cultures. Growing numbers of students from African American, Latino/Latina, Caribbean, Asian, and African backgrounds (a significant portion of whom are classified as Limited English Proficient) converted the district to a majority minority system. The percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunches more than doubled. Student mobility rates, already high, became higher. While the district had launched a variety of programs to address the challenges of a rapidly changing student body, on broadly publicized and widely accepted indicators of school performance (e.g., scores on various district and state tests; surveys of parent satisfaction), the district was not faring well. The expanding slate of schools with persistently low and/or declining scores meant the system was vulnerable to criticism from local constituencies and board members who, as interviews and documents make clear, were "clamoring for change."

The district was also subject to sanction from government agencies. For the past three decades, the district has been the object of intense regulatory pressures from the courts, the federal government and state agencies. These pressures focused initially on issues of equity and racial balance but more recently on issues of academic achievement and organizational performance. The state's increasingly assertive, or as some put it, "invasive" stance angered and alarmed local officials. The state has threatened to reconstitute low-performing schools and has buttressed those threats with various forms of direct intervention in districts whose schools were not meeting state standards for performance or state expectations for progress. Since the district had schools with persistently problematic patterns of performance, the system was a prime candidate for formal state sanction.

While district officials in some settings may be inclined to dismiss the threat of state sanction, be it reconstitution or some other intervention, as a relatively remote possibility (Firestone, Mayrowetz, & Fairman, 1998), key district administrators and key board members in this setting "feared the state might intervene and order its own changes." From their vantage point, the district, already under the watchful eye of state officials who had commissioned a study of the district's management practices and appointed a board to monitor district operations, was clearly under the imminent threat of state reconstitution. By their calculations, the autonomy and control of the system, along with the reputations and the careers of its leaders were in jeopardy.

While demographic changes, regulatory interventions and performance problems are not uncommon developments, they are unnerving, especially in a district whose capacity to accommodate them has been constrained by chronic resource shortages and complicated by divisive intra-organizational conflicts. The level of state allocations, the cap on district property taxes, and the unpredictability of grant monies pose serious, perennial problems for the district as it tries to meet the pent-up demands for improvements in physical facilities, programmatic offerings, technology systems and compensation packages. Located near wealthier school systems, the district operates at a competitive disadvantage in terms of wages, benefits and working conditions and thus has considerable difficulty attracting and retaining credentialed and experienced teachers and administrators.

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As in other settings, the district's ability to respond is also hampered by a history of strained relations among local board members and between board members and their superintendents (Olson & Bradley, 1992; Orr, 1999; Henig, et. al. 1999). Beyond the contentious board-superintendent relations, the sheer size of the bureaucracy, the high rates of personnel turnover, and the high percentages of uncertified or provisionally certified teachers complicate the district's ability to develop, communicate, implement and sustain reform.

The combination of intense contextual pressures and organizational constraints meant that the district was on the verge, if not in the midst of a crisis in confidence. What informants termed "negative publicity" in local papers and media coverage exacerbated the pronounced pressures confronting the district. Clearly, the system was "in the spotlight," and the superintendent was "in the hot seat." He was due for a performance review by the local board. He had received awards for his leadership, but he had also been criticized for what some board members viewed as an unwillingness to take decisive action to rid the district of poor performing teachers [7] and for his inability to improve student achievement and rebut the indictments being leveled by state officials and local constituencies. Like other African American superintendents who are "expected to solve immediately problems that stem from decades of economic, social and racial injustice" (Scott, 1980:55), who are expected to be "a 'miracle man' [sic] who can undo in a few days conditions that years of neglect, and in some cases, mismanagement have created (Moody, cited in Scott, 1980:48), this superintendent was in a precarious position.

An actual or anticipated crisis "evokes search behavior from decision makers. If already existing alternatives.... seem to fit their needs, these alternatives, in adapted form or not, will be pressed into service." (Polsby, 1984; 168). In this case, the context contained an alternative that could be "pressed into service." Reconstitution was part of the state's repertoire. The idea might be adapted at the district level especially since there was some precedent for direct district intervention in troubled schools. [8] Calls for collaborative relationships between schools and their surrounding communities had been centerpiece elements of previous school improvement initiatives and major features of the district's master plan. Thus the context housed a set of alternatives that might be recombined or "re-packaged" (Kingdon, 1995) and applied to a host of problems confronting the district and the superintendent.

PROCESS DYNAMICS

By all accounts the superintendent was the chief architect and advocate of the district's reconstitution reform. Given multiple incentives for action, he used his positional powers and personal resources to quickly and quietly shepherd a potentially explosive initiative through the district's formal and informal decision-making channels. Largely through strategies that controlled the scope of conflict (Schattschneider, 1960), the superintendent orchestrated the dynamics and secured the agreements required to launch his reform proposal.

The Key Actor

The first African American appointed to this office, the superintendent had been an educator and administrator in the school system for many years. Thus, by the time he ascended to the superintendency, he was accustomed to the contextual and organizational challenges faced by the district, as well as the personalities with whom he would interact. His extensive, prior experience in personnel provided specialized expertise that would be especially relevant to a restaffing-based reform proposal. As one put it, "He had the advantage of [having been]...a very active participant in matters related to personnel. He knows personnel procedures backward and forward." He also had, by state statute, the legal authority to assign and reassign teachers.[9] These formal powers were particularly critical resources, given the legacy of superintendent-board tensions and the liabilities that a veteran employee and key member of previous administrations can accumulate.

Incentives for Action

The superintendent decided to advance a reconstitution reform and rely on insider politics to enact it for reasons that reflect personal convictions, contextual pressures and policy characteristics.

Personal Convictions

Informants who know the superintendent well described him as a "passionate child advocate." As an educator and an African American in a high-level leadership position he, like others in comparable roles, believed it was his responsibility to do whatever he could to help dispel the myth that "these kids cannot learn" (Scott, 1980:58). The reconstitution initiative might provide a way to convey that he was not willing to accept what some termed "blame-the child excuses" for low academic achievement. As one who worked closely with the superintendent elaborated:

> He felt that the test scores were sending a message that these students were not being as well served as they needed to be.... He felt that as a responsible administrator in charge of the school system, it was not appropriate to allow these [low performing] schools to continue in their current path.... He needed to send a signal to the school system. Poor achievement would not be condoned. He didn't expect everybody to meet standards the next year, but he expected declining performance to cease.

While the superintendent believed that a reconstitution reform might "send a signal" about his expectations, he also thought it could make a difference in school performance. Central to the superintendent's view of school improvement was the belief that all children had the right to be taught by teachers who are committed to helping them learn. In his mind, reconstitution could provide a mechanism for removing those perceived to be less committed and replacing them with individuals who may be more committed. As one expressed it,

> [the superintendent's] first thought was to only have individuals in those schools who wanted to really be there with those students...[he believed that] if you have people who care about you, you can learn.

He also believed that committed teachers needed the autonomy and flexibility to alter conceptions of and approaches to instruction. The superintendent hoped that giving a rejuvenated faculty the freedom to revamp their schools would mean a "fresh start" for students whose test scores had been steadily declining. As a source in position to know recounted:

> [the superintendent] was always a proponent of giving teachers shared decision making, and [he] always thought of professionalizing the workplace, giving people options, and [he] just thought that by giving people at those six sites that opportunity to define for themselves what would work and what wouldn't work and how they would like to operate that [he] would get more improvement in terms of the students.

An ardent advocate of school-community collaboration, the superintendent hoped that a new opportunity to "develop model schools" would inspire educators, parents, and community representatives to become more involved in and more willing to contribute to an array of programs and activities (e.g., after school tutorials, Saturday sessions, summer academies, mentoring programs) that might bolster student achievement.

While the superintendent subscribed to notions of broad-based faculty and community participation and collaboration, he did not always adhere to them. He believed that effective leaders are willing to act authoritatively and unilaterally. During his tenure, the superintendent had said he "didn't run a democracy." He assumed, as one captured it, that "people want leadership," and that leadership may be exercised through "bold," "decisive," and independent action.

Although the superintendent's beliefs are important, they do not fully explain his decision to advocate a reconstitution reform at the time or in the manner that he chose to do so. His decision to select reconstitution as a policy response and his decision to advance that initiative via insider politics reflect the ability of contextual forces to become dominant factors in a superintendent's decision calculations.

Contextual Forces

One of the strongest pressures for action resided in the state's regulatory requirements and accountability mechanisms. As one explained:

> We understood clearly the high stakes nature of poor performance on state accountability instruments...and how that can lead to state takeover for schools, which is unacceptable.... Something had to be done.

Many informants claimed that the superintendent's reconstitution initiative was a "preemptive strike" waged to "keep the state at bay [and] stave off state oversight." Both documents and interviews confirm that for district officials, the prospect of a state takeover was repugnant on several counts. First, there were the predictable concerns related to usurping local responsibilities. As one recounted:

> The superintendent, like several of the rest of us, was concerned about the impending state reconstitution.... We were thinking that we really shouldn't wait for the state to tell us which schools should have corrective action, we should initiate corrective action.... We should not be relying on an outside source to tell us what schools need. That is our responsibility.... The superintendent decided that the time was now because the need was very great.... A state takeover was definitely, absolutely unacceptable.

Beyond the obvious issues of local responsibility and system autonomy, concerns about "labeling" schools failing schools and imposing school reform models or pre-packaged prescriptions on school staffs reportedly riled the superintendent. He believed that state reconstitution would discount or discredit the efforts and, in some instances, the strides that educators and parents had made to improve schools. As one put it, he thought state reconstitution would "send a lot of negative messages.... It says that everybody at the school is ineffective... It's almost like a scarlet letter. It's hard to get rid of [the stigma]."

Given his caustic criticisms of state reconstitution and his previous calls for teacher professionalism and community collaboration, it is ironic that he settled on a reconstitution initiative and elected to rely on insider politics to enact it. But the contextual pressures had constrained his choices.

Like other superintendents who recognize that "the long term is not a luxury they will be given," (Carter & Cunningham, 1997:73) this superintendent did not have time to move a reform through a complex web of committees. He had to take rapid, dramatic action. The words of one mirror the views of many:

> [The superintendent] had no choice but to do something drastic.... The state's label of failing schools had put people in a panic mode...The testing environment was creating anxiety.... The state had been pressing hard.... [he] had to do something dramatic....We were in a fishbowl with the state...We had to find a way to fend them off...[the superintendent] had to find a way to be victorious.

Pressured to take action quickly and unilaterally, but convinced that the best chance for meaningful reform resided in local level flexibility and creativity, he would advance a locally-driven reconstitution initiative that would require staffing changes but would permit, and hopefully encourage, educator and community involvement in the development of new structures and responsive programs. The comments of one summarize the superintendent's thinking:

> [he] understood the politics of what was swirling around the state...and determined that instead of having someone impose their own structure on a district, it made more sense to....come up with your own remedy and give people an opportunity to participate in that and get more bang, if you will, for the effort.

Another potent incentive for action was lodged in the district's procedures for reviewing the superintendent's performance. Multiple sources maintained that the superintendent was motivated to push the reconstitution reform through because he thought his job depended on it. State pressures had fueled local demands for school improvement. By many accounts, the "heat was on." The superintendent was vulnerable. Like others in similar circumstances, he knew he had to take action and demonstrate effort.[10] As one expressed it, "when you're out there and you know your job is on the line, [and the superintendent] knew [his] job was on the line, you have to do those things that are bold." Advancing a reconstitution effort met that criterion. Such an action would allow the superintendent to incorporate a new, "hot idea" that not only had currency with state officials, but also with local officials who were concerned about "changing the image of the [school system]," improving its performance and halting state "intrusions." As a board spokesperson put it:

> The state was reaching into [the district].... so any concept that would have us in an advance posture, identifying those schools ourselves and designing

> the procedures and personnel changes that would help them would obviously be accepted by board members without exception, which was the case.

In sum, state accountability pressures, augmented by local demands for school improvement, the upcoming superintendent's performance review and the availability of a volatile but malleable alternative that might absorb some of this heavy freight combined to create a compelling set of incentives for action. Simply put, if the superintendent initiated a reconstitution reform, then he might be able to avert state intervention and receive credit for taking courageous action. Since the state had embraced the notion of reconstitution, a proposal that emulated this idea but adapted it to allow new principals, reconfigured faculties and their communities to develop their own plans for school improvement might be the ticket that enabled the superintendent to curb intrusive state action, quell the local "clamor for change," demonstrate his capacity to take resolute action, secure a positive performance review, and advance some of his own ideas and ideals. While these sets of factors explain much of the superintendent's decision to advocate a reconstitution initiative and to rely on insider politics to enact it, another set of factors also came into play.

Policy characteristics.

Reconstitution reforms are, by their very nature, contentious initiatives. As previously noted, their seemingly rash, radical and redistributive properties can ignite conflict and intensify controversy. They are not, as one explained, "the kinds of proposals you take to committees...They are too divisive.... Nothing gets decided." Moving such an explosive proposal through a broad-based participatory process was, in the superintendent's judgment, just too risky. The urgency of the situation and the volatility of the proposal made insider politics a more manageable and a more promising strategy.

Strategies and Accommodations

The superintendent capitalized on his positional resources to advance his reconstitution initiative. His over-arching strategy was to control the scope of conflict through a number of private interactions and proposal adjustments.

The superintendent came up with the "redesign" idea in March and aired it with his executive staff in April. This small group of advisors agreed with the superintendent on "the need" for action, but they did not all agree on "the nature" of the action. Several encouraged him to "reconsider" the idea or, at minimum, to take more time to develop his plan. But that advice was easier to give than to take. In the superintendent's mind, the time was now or never. If a restaffing reform was to be the cornerstone of the district's response to the pressures it was facing, then time was of the essence because employee contracts stipulated that notification of staff reassignments must be made prior to June 1. Given these constraints, the superintendent "defined the nature of the intervention" and "decided that the time was now."

The superintendent and key members of his staff reviewed test score data and developed profiles of the district's low-performing schools. They wanted to be sure that the slate of schools selected for "redesign" could be defended. That meant looking carefully at the "trends" on state tests as well as the results on local measures of school performance. It also meant compiling and examining information on school characteristics and histories. As one described it, "We wanted to find out if there were extenuating circumstances that may have distorted test results and given us an incomplete or inaccurate picture of the school. They also wanted to limit the intervention to a manageable number of sites that might be able to demonstrate progress on key indicators of performance in a relatively short (three-year) time frame.

While some staff suggested starting with three schools, the superintendent decided that six schools, selected on the basis of test scores, attendance and suspension rates, poverty levels, and the amount of grant money available at the sites, would be "redesigned." That number might signal a serious effort, limit the conflict to a select set of sites and keep costs within bounds that the superintendent could handle through existing staff development accounts and through grants that some of the low performing schools had received.

Although the superintendent was crafting the initiative so that it fell within his span of control, he initiated conversations with union officials and board members to reduce the chances that his plan would "blow up in his face." Substituting the familiar language of "redesign" for the inflammatory rhetoric of "reconstitution," emphasizing the opportunity to create "model schools" rather than punish failing schools, and drawing on data that documented "the need" for improvement, the superintendent began to "roll out" his ideas with these key players. Clearly, "there is an important difference between evidence that documents the need for intervention and evidence that documents the efficacy of a particular strategy" (Airasian, 1988: 301). But as is often the case in educational and organizational contexts (Airasian, 1998), the absence of evidence regarding the efficacy of the intervention did not deter the superintendent.[11] There were other powerful appeals that could be made, particularly given the fears, however ill or well founded, associated with state interventions and takeovers.

The superintendent met with representatives of all the unions "so they understood the intent and did not see it as a violation of the negotiated agreements." The superintendent was clear that employees would be "reassigned without penalty or repercussions," not terminated. He was also willing to accommodate the teacher union's demands "to sit in on any and all meetings," to be involved in the design and delivery of staff development programs and to create the "Council for Change," co-chaired by leaders of the teacher's organization and the superintendent's office. This council would serve as the "formal vehicle for guaranteeing [union and parental] involvement and input" throughout the implementation of this initiative in the six targeted schools and in any additional schools the superintendent might decide to "redesign." By most accounts, the union was "coopted." As one spokesperson explained: "We weren't in the position to really fight it because it was going to happen.... We found out about it too late to do a lot to protect our people." The union extracted modest concessions, avoided the risk of being cast as resisting reform, and acceded to the relatively small-scale "redesign" experiment.

In conversations with board members, the superintendent used a strategy that many superintendents rely upon to retain control of potentially contentious issues (Crowson, 1987; Carter & Cunningham, 1994). He framed the initiative as an "information item," making superintendent-board member exchanges a matter of professional courtesy, "not a request for board permission." By emphasizing "the need for change" and by defining the initiative as an administrative prerogative rather than a policy shift, the superintendent secured a semblance of board support. [12]

Following these interactions, the superintendent met individually with the existing principals of the six targeted schools to inform them of the initiative and its implications for them and to ask them to "host" a meeting of faculty and staff at which the superintendent, or representatives of his office, would announce the initiative and elaborate its implications for teachers and support staff. The stage was set for the reconstitution initiative to become an official action to be announced and implemented in the schools.

IMPLEMENTING RECONSTITUTION REFORM

The insider politics that yielded success in the enactment phase could not sustain the initiative in the implementation stage. The faculties had to be put on notice; principals had to be replaced. In short, the private agreements had to become public actions. And, during this translation, the superintendent quickly lost control of the reform. Two years after it was launched, the initiative, by nearly all accounts, had "disappeared," save for the lingering sense of disappointment, betrayal, and disillusionment it had engendered (Finkelstein, et al., 2000). This synopsis of political dynamics and reform outcomes illustrates how the superintendent's success with

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insider politics did little to assist and much to limit his ability to install and sustain this reform.

POLITICAL DYNAMICS

When the reconstitution initiative was announced, the superintendent tried to rally support for it. But once made public, the reform "took on a life of its own" not only in media accounts, but also in the reconstituted schools. Thrust into a reactive posture and haunted by a series of miscalculations, the superintendent was not able to control the discourse, contain the disruption, or counter the discontent engendered by the reform.

The Campaign for Control

The first attempt to retain control over the reconstitution reform occurred when the superintendent announced his initiative to the faculties and staffs of the targeted schools during "face to face" meetings. With key district administrators, representatives from the personnel division, the school board, and various employee unions at his side, the superintendent challenged all faculty and staff "to make a real, public commitment to the school by going through the restaffing process." He also reassured all school employees that if they chose not to participate in this initiative, they would be assigned positions elsewhere in the district. Armed with the reassurance of continued employment and the rhetoric of "redesign" and "opportunity," the superintendent tried to control the definition of the situation, a strategy that can be particularly effective both in "handling opposition" (Kanter, 1983) and in creating and maintaining momentum (Kanter, 1983; Pfeffer,1992).

Strategies the superintendent used to minimize opposition and muster momentum were designed to appeal both to the teachers' desire to improve student outcomes and their desire to be treated as professionals. In promoting the reform he not only depicted the reform as a way to "create model schools" and "make a real difference for kids," but he also emphasized the reform's potential for "advancing [teachers'] careers" and providing teachers with greater recognition. In efforts to turnaround teachers' initial feelings of "shock" and "disbelief," "anger" and "anxiety," "pain," and "humiliation" that surfaced when the reform was aired, the superintendent concentrated on what the teachers in the reconstituted schools would stand to gain. As one teacher recalled:

> The superintendent dropped a bomb. It devastated people. He had to do something to try to make this thing seem more positive. So, he made lots of

> promises about things that matter to teachers...like small class sizes, instructional aides, computers, materials, supplies...

The blend of appeals and reassurances were persuasive to some who were "moved by what the superintendent said," and believed that "if [the superintendent] gave the schools what he said he would give them, [the school] would be a great place to teach." But, for most educators, the initiative came across as a "real slap in the face," as a brutal and blanket indictment of teachers' competence and commitment. Unprepared for the depth, breadth, and durability of the negative reactions the reform invoked among the faculties and staffs at the schools, the superintendent was consumed with fending off opposition rather than building up momentum.

In an effort to quell the trauma the announcement created, the superintendent and/or his designates agreed to follow-up meetings with faculty and staff. They also hosted meetings with parents and community residents who learned of the initiative and were upset by the loss of principals they respected, the loss of "their favorite teachers," and the lack of parental involvement in decisions regarding their school (Finkelstein, et al. 2000).

In meetings with school personnel, the superintendent listened to concerns, reminded all employees that they were guaranteed a job in the district, repeated his rationales, and reiterated "the promises" that might make this initiative more palatable to teachers. Some teachers acknowledged that they might have embellished the slate of "promises" with their own "wishful thinking." But the consistency and uniformity of their statements gives credence to the claim that, through public and private meetings with the superintendent, "teachers were led to believe we would get a lot of things—veteran teachers, small class sizes, computers, aides, materials...." These "promises" helped the superintendent gain some early allies, but, as subsequent sections will show, hurt his ability to develop stable and enduring alignments with the educators he had to depend on to carry out the reform.

In meetings with parents and community members the superintendent tried not only to listen to concerns but also to put the focus on "the data" that documented and dramatized the decline in performance. He wanted them to see that "if those teachers had been there all of those years and test scores were continuing to decline...they were not doing that much for students." Trying to walk the fine line between indicting teachers and justifying restaffing, he emphasized, "dealing with the data [that] reflect that students are [regressing]." Given the dearth of data demonstrating that this initiative might reverse those patterns, the superintendent's efforts to keep "the need" for change, rather than the efficacy of the intervention in the limelight made sense, politically (Airasian, 1988). These and other efforts to rationalize the reform were reinforced through a variety of written communiqués shared with teachers, parents, media reporters, and others interested in the initiative.[13]

In sum, the superintendent tried to both "handle opposition" and "build momentum" (Kanter, 1983) through an array of strategies. He offered reassurances, crafted appeals, including a slate of "promises" that might be especially salient to teachers, created forums for the expression and management of discontent, and provided justifications for his initiative. But these strategies were not sufficient to retain control over the definition of the situation or the disruption and disaffection the reform would engender.

The Loss of Control

Media Influence.

As is often the case when private issues are unleashed in public arenas, "spectators" of various persuasions can enter the fray and alter the dynamics in dramatic, and, at times, decisive ways (Schattsneider, 1960). When the superintendent announced his initiative, the media became a player, but not a promoter of the reform. Headlines that referred to the initiative as a "purge" of school staffs and claimed that district officials were "mum on criteria used to oust . . . teachers" directed attention to the punitive and seemingly arbitrary character of the reform. These media accounts reportedly had a major impact, particularly among those who found out about the initiative from the media, rather than the superintendent. Informants at all our sample schools maintained that the media coverage fueled allegations that "all the teachers had been fired" and, in some instances, prompted students to taunt their teachers. Both the tone and content of articles implied that the displaced teachers and principals were incompetent and uncommitted educators. For example, stories suggested parents would not want these principals and teachers "reassigned" to their children's schools. In these and other ways, media coverage served to magnify the stigma associated with the "redesign" initiative.

The superintendent tried to counter with his own press releases designed to reassure employees and parents that the initiative was an effort, as documents noted, to "extract greater commitments from [educators], not a ploy to get rid of them." But he was not able to rein in the damage. Although coverage tapered off shortly after the initiative was announced, the media had put the superintendent on the defensive by focusing on the initiative's caustic and seemingly capricious qualities and by broadcasting the negative reactions of teachers and parents. The small number of more positive human-interest stories (e.g., school-sponsored picnics for new staffs to meet parents and students; teachers greeting students and parents on the first day of school) also contained criticisms of the initiative. Thus, the media repeatedly confounded the superintendent's ability to keep his vision of the initiative in the public eye and to influence the tenor of public and private characterizations of the reform.

Employee Departures

As earlier noted, when faculty and staff learned that their schools would be reconstituted, most were "shocked", "insulted," "angered," and "deeply hurt" for several reasons. First, the superintendent's initiative came without clear warning. While test scores were generally low in the targeted schools, some schools had demonstrated encouraging improvements on select tests and had received reassuring comments from district administrators and, in one case, from an external review team. Relying on insider politics to ensure enactment, the superintendent had not consulted the employees or the parents of students who would be affected by the initiative. For those not privy to the insider dynamics, the superintendent's initiative came "out of the blue." The lack of clear warning, along with the "last-minute timing" (just under the contractual deadlines for notifying employees about upcoming reassignments) engendered suspicion, frustration and fury.

Second, many saw the requirement that all faculty and staff who wished to remain at the school had to reapply as an indefensible response to quality concerns. As two stated:

> How can we be told we are not good enough to teach here but we can still teach somewhere in the [district]? If we are not doing our jobs we should be fired, not transferred.

> If teachers are weak, you can remove them or retrain them or even transfer them...You don't have to annihilate a whole faculty to deal with a few bad apples who may mean well but do not teach well.

Third, the reapplication process came across as "disrespectful," "humiliating" treatment. The common perception that "people who have proven their worth [were required to] beg for their jobs" contributed to "the pain and anguish" many teachers felt at the outset and continued to feel two years later, when they thought about how their faculty was "torn apart," "destroyed."

While the precise impact of these sentiments on teachers' decisions to reapply for their positions is difficult to gauge, comments suggest that the negative sentiments prompted some reputedly excellent teachers to accept positions in other schools and in other districts. Comments from both teachers who departed and teachers who were re-hired capture the dominant view:

> Lots of dedicated professionals who knew the curriculum and the students and had their classroom management strategies in tact left because they

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> would not succumb to the insult; they would not tolerate the disrespect, the mistreatment.
>
> We lost some wonderful, experienced teachers.... We got rid of a few bad ones too, but we lost some real jewels.
>
> We lost lots of good teachers. The approach was all wrong. It was not respectful. People...did not want to reapply. They were hurt. They left.... The school lost out.

Whether valued, veteran teachers left because they were insulted, apprehensive about "what would be happening at the schools" or otherwise put off, teachers and administrators maintained that one immediate effect of the superintendent's initiative was that "outstanding teachers left" and "outstanding teams were blown apart."

This loss was not just an initial, arguably inevitable fall-out of the reform. Administrators, teachers and parents maintained that the reconstitution initiative contributed to the loss of reputedly strong teachers long after it was announced. At the end of the first year, in our sample schools, about 25% of the teachers who had been hired elected to depart the schools for a number of reasons, including lingering resentment and growing disillusionment with the initiative and the district. At the end of the second year, faculty turnover subsided in one sample school but at the other sample sites, many teachers, including some who were initially enthusiastic supporters of the reform, continued to elect to leave, often for reform-related reasons (Finkelstein, et al. 2000)

Since many teachers expressed their opposition to this reform by exercising the exit option, [14] the superintendent could not engender, let alone solidify support. Relying on insider politics, to launch the initiative, the superintendent had not sought broad-based endorsements prior to the announcement of the initiative. After the initiative was launched, the audience to be converted kept shifting, disillusionment with the reform kept intensifying, and prospects for creating coalitions of allies kept eroding.

Employee Alienation

As earlier noted, when the superintendent announced his initiative, he angered and alienated many of the faculty and staff in the targeted schools. While large numbers "left in disgust," others stayed. Those who returned, like those who were hired to fill the many vacancies, held high hopes. To be sure, some were skeptical of "the promises" that had been made, but many looked forward to being in workplaces led by seasoned principals and characterized by large numbers of master teachers and instructional aides, smaller class sizes, ample and innovative instructional materials, and extensive and dependable technological supports. Many also looked forward to the opportunity to "create model schools" and to district endorsement of those efforts. But as the reform unfolded, nearly all the teachers and administrators we interviewed maintained that their experiences were very different than their expectations. As one summarized, "It's been the opposite of everything we expected."

Although the superintendent had implied that the reconstituted schools would be lead by seasoned administrators, he appointed relatively inexperienced principals to these schools. [15] These appointments were not the only staff changes that ran counter to expectations. Unprepared for the initial exodus of veteran teachers, the superintendent could not staff the redesigned schools with clusters of master teachers like he had promised. Operating in a context characterized by teacher shortages and on the tight (three-month) time frame set by the superintendent, newly appointed principals were, in their words, "struggling" just to fill the vacancies. They were often hiring new teachers, many of whom had not completed all the requirements for certification. While many of these individuals had "real promise," they were, by their own admission, not prepared for the challenges embodied in this reform (Finkelstein, et al. 2000). But these new teachers were not the only staff members who felt inadequate.

By virtually all accounts, the reconstitution reform "threw the schools into a frenzy." Administrators and teachers alike talked often about the "confusion," "chaos," and "pressure" the initiative generated as new administrators, a few experienced educators, and large percentages of novice teachers who had no direct knowledge of the students or the community, tried to develop an organizational infrastructure and deliver an instructional program that conformed to district and state standards. Administrators and teachers in all our sample schools talked candidly about feeling "swamped," "inundated," and "overwhelmed" by all that had to be done to figure out and carry out the day to day operations of schools. They talked frequently about "making it through the day" and keeping their sights on "avoiding major disasters." Thrust into a "survival mode," site educators were unable to develop the collegial networks and innovative programs that were to be the hallmarks of "redesigned" schools.

Although the initial strain of the reform subsided during the second year of implementation, the pattern of administrative reassignments and staff departures meant that site actors were having to continuously focus on restoring the organizational infrastructure and establishing the routines required to manage the daily operations of schools. An administrator captured the frustration that many voiced, "Every year is a first year. We just keep starting over." Both the degree and duration of disruption that occurred ran counter to the images of innovation created by the superintendent and the expectations held by site educators.

As the reform unfolded, site-level educators were regularly reminded that the reconstituted schools were not afforded the degrees of freedom the superintendent promised. In his meetings with educators, the superintendent had stressed that the initiative was an opportunity "to break the mold." But, faculties experienced more pressures to standardize than opportunities to innovate. Instead of deciding when and how various aspects of the curriculum would be taught, teachers felt pressured to "be on the same page" irrespective of whether students had mastered the prerequisite materials and skills. Although the nature and intensity of the pressures varied across our sample sites, teachers in all the settings we studied talked frequently and frankly about pressures to "concentrate on the tests, not the kids," to abide the new rule of thumb, "if you can't test it, don't teach it." Select but representative comments illustrate:

> It's a lot different than what we were told.
>
> Now its just raising test scores. Now we know what we were hired to do. All those things that were said and promised don't matter. It's the test scores, pure and simple. That's what matters. We have no choice.

Amidst these pressures for standardization, teachers and administrators alike maintained that opportunities to be creative in the classroom were diminished and opportunities to redesign the school as an organization were virtually nonexistent. Once again, site educators experienced discrepancies between "the promises" and the realities of this reform.

These disparities were exacerbated by the inability of the superintendent to provide the human, fiscal and informational resources he had pledged. Although he had set up a special office to assist the schools and provided some discretionary funds to three of the six schools during the first year of implementation, the "redesigned" schools did not receive all the additional staff, materials, or professional supports that had been promised. At the end of the first year of the reform, the new office was disbanded and responsibility for oversight and support was transferred to an office that monitored school improvement plans in all the district's "low performing" schools. During the second year of implementation, evidence of special allocations in any form, disappeared in part because the superintendent, who had lost board support, was not in a position to defend this initiative against the intense pressures to redirect district resources to the growing number of schools the state had targeted for reconstitution (Rice & Croninger, 2001). In this competitive context, the superintendent's "redesign" effort had become "a small fish in a huge, gigantic frying pan." Realizing that they were largely "on their own," site educators felt "deserted."

Having underestimated the demands and over-sold the promises of the reconstitution initiative, the superintendent was not able to effectively counter the specific criticisms that site-level educators voiced through union grievances and through the "Council for Change." And, throughout the implementation phase, he had no answer for the pervasive sense of "disillusionment," "betrayal," and "abandonment" that site educators experienced as they worked to deliver instructional programs and services to students in the reconstituted schools. Thus it is not surprising that at the end of the second year of the reform, many informants claimed that "the powers that be have forgotten [the reform] and us." Given the stark and stubborn discrepancies between what the superintendent had promised at the outset, and what site educators experienced during implementation, the initiative had lost its visibility and the superintendent had lost his credibility (Finkelstein, et al., 2000). The words of one capture the dominant view:

> At first all you heard was [the reconstitution] reform. Now it is not found in print in things sent to us. It was not acknowledged or targeted [in memos or meetings]. There is no special notation, no special treatment, not even a banner. The reform has evaporated.... We have been abandoned.

REFORM OUTCOMES

As mirrors of political dynamics, reform outcomes reflect the relative power of the players as well as the relative strengths of an initiative. In this case, the policy outcomes underscore the superintendent's loss of control and the initiative's inability to secure the political and educational benefits that were attached to it.

The initiative did not stop state intervention in the district. Less than a year after the "redesign" initiative was launched, the state placed schools in the district on the reconstitution "watch list" and increased the number of schools on this list in subsequent years. As one described it,

> The real deal was that [the superintendent] did this hoping that the state wouldn't come in and name schools, and of course, the state came in the next year and named schools. Then the following year they named some more schools.... Then there was this constant pressure about the low-performing schools....

Given these state actions, the hopes of avoiding the stigma of state intervention were dashed and resources designated for the superintendent's initiative were re-directed to the schools the state had placed on the "watch list" (King and Croninger, 2000).

Beyond having failed to preempt more extensive and aggressive state intervention, the initiative also failed to relieve the local pressures for change and secure the superintendent's position. Press accounts indicate that the board was reluctant to renew the superintendent's contract and eager to search for a successor who might better be able to restore confidence in the system. Amidst these sentiments, the superintendent retired.

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In addition to these political losses, the initiative imposed serious political costs on the district, most notably the exodus of teachers, the alienation of employees, and the loss of legitimacy among those within as well as those outside the school system. One of the most serious repercussions of this reform is the pervasive belief that the district cannot be trusted to honor its commitments to the people who work in schools and to the communities served by the schools. Citing their multiple experiences with "broken promises," informants maintained that the reform tended to undermine rather than engender commitment to, or faith in, the district (Malen, 2000). That is a costly consequence for any reform, but a particularly heavy toll for an initiative that was advanced to not only improve the performance but also enhance the stability and legitimacy of the system.

INTERPRETATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Our case study findings are consistent with the extant literature on the "politics of finesse" (Mazzoni, 1987), the "inside maneuver" (Malen, 1985) and the "slipping by" (Polsby, 1984) strategies that may be used to enact more radical, redistributive reforms in state and federal subsystem arenas. Our findings also illustrate how the "politics of finesse" may complicate what we term the "politics of persuasion," present in more private efforts to secure the support of key individuals during enactment, but most apparent in the public efforts to mobilize the support of front-line groups charged with the responsibility for implementing the mandates issued by others. Situated in these broader literatures, the case holds implications for understanding how a reliance on insider politics to secure enactment might influence implementation dynamics and policy outcomes.

THE "POLITICS OF FINESSE"

The enactment phase of the reconstitution reform illustrates key elements of insider politics. The superintendent resembles the "policy entrepreneur" who, by virtue of expertise, stature and/or "authoritative decision-making position" has "some claim to a hearing" (Kingdon, 1995:180). Motivated by various combinations of personal, professional, and situational factors, the entrepreneur adopts and adapts an available alternative, then couples the proposal to problems and to political forces that either necessitate or facilitate its adoption (Kingdon, 1994; Mazzoni, 1986). In parallel form, the superintendent, responding to a combination of forces, seized a seemingly serviceable alternative and adjusted it to reflect his convictions and to include features (professional collaboration, community-

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based involvement) of the district's master plan for school improvement. He then attached it to problems of organizational performance, state intervention and system legitimacy. Exhibiting the array of strategies that can operate to narrow the scope of conflict, the superintendent confined his initial conversations and information gathering activities to a small subset of his organizational staff and developed a maneuverable proposal (one that coincided with his span of control, signaled dramatic action but contained costs). He renamed reconstitution "redesign," negotiated with representatives of powerful units (notably the union and the board), adjusted the proposal to assuage concerns, and linked the initiative to salient issues, such as "the need" for school improvement, the desire to curb state "interference" and the appeal of a "proactive", rather than "reactive" posture.

Reflecting a defining feature of insider politics, the superintendent did not open the decision-making arena to relevant publics because in this case, as in other instances, efforts to do so "increase the visibility and hence the vulnerability of the proposed change" (Mazzoni, 1987:228). The stakes embodied in redistributive policies invite and ignite controversy in many organizations (Pfeffer, 1981), including local districts (Peterson, 1976; Henig, et al., 1999). Given the potential for conflict escalation, the price of protracted political battles and/or the possibility of political gridlock, trying to institute a major, controversial change by circumventing, rather than by "meeting opposition head on and overcoming it" (Polsby, 1984:159) can become, as it did in this instance, an attractive strategy that might enhance the chance of an enactment victory.

While this case corroborates our knowledge of the resources and strategies that contribute to the creation of the insider game, it extends our understanding of this dynamic in several ways. First, this case directs attention to broader, institutional forces as a major factor affecting the selection of policy options to be enacted through insider dynamics. The superintendent was a harsh critic of reconstitution, not only because it was a state intervention, but also because it was a distasteful proposition. It embodied a host of negative messages that could discredit educators, destroy morale, and disrupt operations. Yet he picked that basic approach to reform largely because he had to craft a response to state pressures that fit the terms set by state institutions. Institutions and their broader environments "generate rules, regulations, norms and definitions of the situation" that can affect thought and action in subtle but potent ways (Rowan & Miskel, 1999: 359). Indeed, "our conception of what is possible and what is not possible is influenced by the institutional environment within which we live and work" (Portz, et al., 1999;24). In this case, the broader institutional environment pressed the superintendent to select a reform that was aligned with this larger context as a way to restore some legitimacy to the district and its leaders. Reconstitution, the most poignant component of the state's repertoire for remediating "low-performing" schools, became the natural, if not the necessary choice.

Second, this case directs attention to external pressures as the primary impetus for insider dynamics. There is little doubt in our data that state pressures propelled action. They created urgency and instilled panic. When circumstances appear to require that "radical" action be taken in rapid fashion, as they seemed to in this case, the path of least resistance is especially attractive. Moving a "radical" change through more public arenas might take more time and require more political capital than this superintendent, or others in comparable situations, possess. By uncovering and documenting the external forces that can trigger the insider dynamics, this case helps explain why "radical" reform may be initiated in subsystem arenas that are more inclined, if not predisposed, to engage in consensual, incremental policymaking.

Third, this case illustrates that what policy entrepreneurs are unable to do may be as important as what they are able to do. In this case, specialized expertise and formal authority allowed the superintendent to meld a proposal, control the information flow, broker modest adjustments and elicit the instrumental, if not the ideational agreements required to enact his initiative. But, he could not compel the press to publish positive endorsements; he could not force the teachers to support a reform that however clothed, was, at its core, a biting indictment of their competence and commitment; and, he could not require the parents and community to collaborate with the schools, be they newly reconstituted or left in tact. Insider dynamics required that the superintendent work around these interests rather than with them. In this district, as in other places, outmaneuvering teachers "might succeed in getting reform initiatives on the books, but implementing and institutionalizing those initiatives will be extremely problematic" (Henig, et al. 1999). The same might be said for circumventing the community (Johnson, 1996). That is not to say that working with these interests would yield strong policy or favorable publicity, only that working around them may exacerbate the heady problem of consonant policy implementation, in part because it complicates the "politics of persuasion," that is such a critical component of fostering innovation in organizations generally, and in schools more specifically.

THE "POLITICS OF PERSUASION"

Since interdependence is a fact of organizational life, those who advance major initiatives must persuade others to carry out the changes that have been authorized. When authorization comes through an insider dynamic (wherein some forms of persuasion, to borrow Edelman's (1964) metaphor, may be required to make "backstage deals" but no attempt has been made to launch the "frontstage appeals" required to legitimate the initiative), the "politics of persuasion" that must be carried out on the public platform can become especially critical, and, as this case demonstrates, particularly problematic. While it is difficult to mute the punitive properties of reconstitution with the professionalizing provisions of teacher engagement in the "redesign" of school organizations, instructional programs, and related services, the politics of enactment made it even more difficult for the superintendent to convert the skeptics and opponents to neutral parties or loyal allies. In short, the insider dynamics stymied support mobilization in a number of ways. Thus the case suggests multiple, inter-related "paths" or avenues through which the "politics of finesse" may affect implementation dynamics and, relatedly, policy outcomes. [16]

PATHS OF INFLUENCE

Recognizing that policy choices along with the political strategies used to advance them interact to shape policy processes and outcomes, we highlight some of the ways the insider game may have operated to influence, and, in this instance, impede implementation. Whether these observations apply to other policy choices or other policy contexts is an open, empirical question. However, this case suggests that several "paths" of influence may merit attention as we seek to understand the connections between enactment politics and implementation developments.

Policy Design

This case suggests that like other styles of play, insider politics may produce policies that are highly susceptible to criticisms regarding their substantive viability and, as a result, very difficult to promote and defend. The reconstitution reform was vulnerable on many counts, such as the absence of provisions for attracting talented educators to the "redesigned" schools and the dearth of data to suggest that restaffing schools necessarily improves them.

While there may be many reasons for the weak design, one possibility is that insider politics restricts information gathering and problem solving interactions to a small group of individuals. Any ambitious effort to critically examine the content and design of a policy proposal risks unraveling the shroud of secrecy that helps insulate the initiative and ease enactment. That is not to say that insider dynamics are necessarily ill informed or under-handed (Mazzoni, 1986, 1987). It is only to say that insider politics pivot on private, low-visibility exchanges that keep the scope of conflict narrow and manageable. Even when the formal rules of decision making have been followed, as they were in this case, the efforts to contain the scope of conflict can override attempts to secure the information that may be required to strengthen policy design. There is no way of knowing whether a more open, participatory process would have produced a stur-

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dier policy in this case. But the decision to keep the development of the reconstitution initiative in the hands of a few meant that opportunities to identify and address arguably predictable problems were clearly limited.

Policy Legitimacy

As this case illustrates, the "politics of finesse" may permit policy entrepreneurs to enact policies that are aligned with the broader system and thereby enhance legitimacy through "mimetic processes" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983:151) that signal that the organization is trying to improve; that its leaders are making extraordinary efforts and "acting in ways that are modern and rational" (Rowan & Miskel, 1999:367). While such emulation can be a potentially potent source of legitimacy, particularly with the key actors in the broader system who are promulgating those policies, it provided in this instance, an insufficient supply of legitimating symbols and actions. State officials were not impressed, at least not impressed enough to curb state intervention in the district. Moreover, the superintendent's decision to embrace state policy (and, at the same time, to distinguish his initiative from it) translated into a loss of legitimacy, notably with internal audiences, including the reputedly effective teachers he had hoped to inspire and needed to retain.

This loss of legitimacy was related not only to the policy choice but also to the enactment process. The reconstitution initiative came without warning or warrant; and, it came without opportunity to offer input, organize opposition or otherwise influence a controversial and consequential policy decision. Given these conditions, it is not surprising that, from the outset, many of the relevant stakeholders were not convinced that the initiative was a fair or appropriate approach to education reform, a view that was reinforced when "promises" attached to the policy never materialized.

Policy Appeals and Trust Levels

When the viability and legitimacy of an initiative are suspect, and when efforts to mobilize stakeholder support have been delayed by the demands of insider politics, policy entrepreneurs must bring other resources and strategies to bear to garner support, address concerns, and secure compliance. In this case, efforts to mobilize broad-based support were belated. They had to start after the initiative was announced, rather than during its formulation, when various strategies, such as seeking and securing information and ideas from employees and other relevant constituencies can lay the groundwork for campaigns to secure the necessary backing (Kanter, 1983). They were encumbered by the suspicion and distrust that is generated when official actions that have profound personal and professional ramifications appear to come without notice or recourse. And, they were countered by the intense, negative reaction that occurred when the initiative was made public. Under these conditions, it is easy to succumb to that pervasive but destructive temptation of "overselling" a reform, of making and inflating promises that, in all likelihood, cannot be kept (House, 1974:185). As House (1974) warned, decades ago, "The very act of obtaining necessary support often seduces the entrepreneur into making promises impossible to fulfill" (p. 186). And when the efforts to secure support for a vulnerable and controversial policy are both belated and suspect, the temptation to "oversell" can be very hard to resist. In this case, the superintendent made glowing promises (e.g., small classes, instructional aides) that would escalate the cost of the reform. Amidst fiscal constraints, labor shortages, strained board relations, and other competing demands, the superintendent could not deliver on these commitments. Here, as in other settings, the litany of "broken promises" engendered resentment, distrust, and disillusionment (House, 1974) that made it even more difficult to garner support for the initiative.

Conflict Accommodation

As this case illustrates, the insider dynamic can intensify conflict and place policy advocates at a distinct disadvantage in handling that reaction. The conflict policy entrepreneurs seek to avoid through a privatized enactment can surface with a vengeance in implementation. Although teachers and parents in this case did not organize to overturn the superintendent's decision, they did voice their opposition. [17] Some even appealed to state officials to reverse the superintendent's action. The voice of opponents did not make the superintendent rescind his initiative; but the mass exit of teachers at the outset and the subsequent departure of teachers at the end of the first and second year of the reform clearly contributed to the defeat of the initiative in implementation.

The insider game may complicate the ability to mobilize support not only because it can intensify reactions once the policy is made public, but also because it can reduce the capacity for conflict accommodation. While the insider game denies resisters the opportunity to oppose an initiative, it also denies supporters the opportunity to invest in it. That is not to say that organizational members will readily coalesce around a redistributive proposal. Nor is it to say that support can be "all built in advance." (Louis & Miles, 1990:29). Some forms of support tend to develop after, rather than before individuals have direct experience with an initiative (Louis & Miles, 1990). The point is simply that reliance on the insider dynamic means the opportunity to test the waters, locate kindred spirits, implant compelling appeals or otherwise "soften up" the system (Kingdon, 1995) is lost. So, when the conflict ultimately and inevitably erupts, the potential allies are dispersed; the potential resisters are outraged. Incensed by the process as well as the proposal and unchecked by the countervailing force of even a small, unified band of sympathetic if not stalwart supporters, the resisters may seize the exit option in numbers that severely damage, if not eventually defeat the initiative. These developments, along with other factors like the erosion of trust make it harder for policy entrepreneurs to manage conflict, mobilize support and stabilize the system.

Leader Credibility and Regime Stability

The case suggests that the reliance on insider dynamics may weaken the position of system leaders and even contribute to their demise. The enactment of unpopular proposals through closed processes can unleash a backlash against those who orchestrate the decision-making process, particularly when the promises attached to it do not materialize. In this instance, the superintendent was in a very precarious position before he launched the reconstitution initiative. Whether this policy overture in combination with other forces sealed his fate cannot be ascertained from the data. What can be said is that the reconstitution experience did not enable him to establish credibility with key audiences, engender confidence in his position, nor secure backing to complete the "three-year" experiment.

In these and perhaps other ways, both the policy choice and the enactment process made it extremely difficult to mobilize stakeholder support, be that in the form of resource allocations or favorable sentiments. Without such support, even the most promising and appealing policy initiatives can be foiled (e.g., Henig, et. al. 1999). In this case, the inability to garner sufficient support for an untested and contentious policy experiment thwarted implementation.

A POINT OF DEPARTURE

This case generates insights regarding how and why the "politics of finesse" might be used to enact redistributive reforms that might not be adopted through more open, participatory processes. It also illustrates some of the inter-related paths through which insider politics can tarnish implementation dynamics and influence policy outcomes. One of the unfortunate twists of this case is that many of the outcomes the superintendent had hoped to avoid by averting state takeover occurred as his own plan for reform unfolded. Some of those unfortunate outcomes were the direct or indirect by-products of the "politics of finesse." Whether opening up the policy formulation process would have helped the superintendent anticipate arguably predictable problems and avoid the multiple miscalculations that ended up plaguing implementation is a debatable proposition. [18] What seems clear, however, is that the insider dynamics that enabled the superintendent to achieve a victory in enactment, sowed the seeds of defeat in implementation.

That prospect crystallizes a risk facing policy analysts and actors who find the pace of incremental change unacceptable, the probability of contentious public contests unsettling, and the prospect of pluralistic bargaining unsatisfactory. In a desperate or inspired fashion, policy entrepreneurs may elect to orchestrate an insider game that ushers in more radical, redistributive reforms only to have that "win" nullified by the subsequent intensification of conflict, erosion of legitimacy, and lack of progress on the measures that matter most, the quality of educational experiences afforded the students in schools that are the targets of reform.

As is often true of case studies, this one does more to illuminate some of the potential pitfalls of a particular political strategy than to solve the perennial puzzle of how to develop the policies and the politics that might more constructively address the "dual challenge" of conflict regulation and institutional legitimation as well as the fundamental problem of organizational performance. Hopefully this case serves as a useful point of departure for those who may wish to examine more fully the political dimensions of "radical," redistributive initiatives that have become a prominent feature in the ongoing quest for educational reform.

NOTES

1. Authors are identified in alphabetical order. Each made different, but equally important contributions to the development of this article.

2. In both academic and popular press accounts, these initiatives are often depicted as "radical," "results-based" reforms that will "turn around" troubled schools (Fuhrman, 2001; Ladd, 1996; Ruenzel, 1997).

3. See Malen (2000) for elaboration. In brief, calls for sweeping staff changes signal that school staffs rather than district errors, state shortcomings, broad social forces or a host of other factors are the proximate cause of school failure and hence the appropriate target for remedial action. In essence, educators at the site absorb the blame for declining school performance. The credit for whatever organizational improvements (or illusions of improvement) that may follow can be attributed, rhetorically if not substantively, to the daring and decisive action of those who advocated and authorized the reform. If the reconstitution fades or fails, that credit-blame equation may be modified. But, at least at the outset, the act of reconstitution can represent an emphatic and visible, if not enduring redistribution of credit and blame (Malen, 2000).

4. This study was supported by a partnership between the local district and a university-based interdisciplinary study team. The partnership was initiated and developed by Barbara Finkelstein, principal investigator. Other members of the research team included the authors of this article, Jennifer King Rice, Robert Croninger, Liza Briggs, Kim Thrasher, Reem Mourad, and Jean Snell. Richard Hopkins, Heinrick Mintrop, Takao Kamibeppu and Ryoko Kato Tsuneyoshi also assisted

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5. For example, open-ended interview guides were used; assurances of anonymity were provided; interviews were taped, whenever possible and detailed notes were taken in all instances. Data analysis involved scrutinizing sources to (1) identify prominent patterns as well as exceptions to them, (2) lay out the "chains of evidence" that supported, contradicted or qualified emergent themes and interpretations (Yin, 1994), and (3) develop narrative accounts of the enactment process as well as detailed, descriptive case studies of the participants' expectations of and experiences with the reform in three of the six reconstituted schools (two elementary and one middle school). We checked the detail, accuracy and consistency of information received from individual interviews and compared the extent to which themes were evident in (absent from or challenged by) the information provided by other interviews or derived from the documents and the meeting observations. The team's research reports were reviewed by key informants and two colleagues who have expertise in education policy but were not involved in this study (Murphy, 1980). As a further check for bias and error in the preparation of this article, we conducted four follow-up conversations with key informants and sought reviews from three individuals who have been proximate observers of the state and district political context as well as proximate observers of the reconstitution initiative and one individual who has no first-hand knowledge of the case but has expertise in education politics.

6. Comments such as "things come back" indicate some informants did not believe it was safe to express their views. Multiple counter comments such as "No secrets here" or "We feel like we can tell you anything and everything," suggest most were willing to be candid.

7. By some accounts the superintendent and board had different views regarding how to handle personnel issues. The superintendent was more inclined to try to "find the right fit" for teachers and administrators. The board was more inclined to want to fire employees.

8. While blanket, total restaffing initiatives were not part of the district's history, the removal of principals, the reassignment of faculty and staff, the use of monitoring teams to oversee school operation and other forms of oversight were part of the district's repertoire.

9. While the local board hires and fires all employees and "appoints" individuals to administrative posts, the superintendent "assigns" them to their positions and transfers them "as the needs of the schools require."

10. Generally speaking, superintendents realize that "being affiliated with a hot, new idea is a ticket to professional stature and recognition. Superintendents who attempt dramatic innovations garner grants and professional rewards that are then used as proxies for performance.... Superintendents who do not attempt innovations risk being perceived as laggards by their peers and the broader community" (Hess, 1999b: 45). Many also recognize that "effort is ...an important factor in a board's assessment of a superintendent's performance [and that] ...most boards can forgive a superintendent for trying too hard [but] very few accept half-hearted effort."

11. Data on the impact of various reconstitution experiments are scarce. Thus, there was little basis for assuming that reconstitution could create the ingredients of school improvement the superintendent had identified in the proposal. Moreover, there was little evidence that this set of ingredients would improve student achievement.

12. Documents reveal that key board members may have been willing to go along with the initiative, in large measure because it was a way to counter state criticism, leverage state support, and "justify differential allocations of resources," to the local groups that were inclined to contest the board's distribution decisions. Thus their commitments may have been more instrumental than ideational.

13. The superintendent sent memos that described the initiative to teachers in the system and invited them to apply for positions. He sent letters regarding the purposes of the initiative and the expectations for parental involvement in decisions regarding how the schools could be changed to parents of students in the targeted schools. He also developed fliers that could be shared with the media, and with other individuals or groups that sought information on the reform.

14. Some faculty and staff retired; some accepted positions in other schools in the district; some sought refuge in surrounding districts; some left the profession to pursue other occupations.

15. While all had prior administrative experience, they were consistently characterized as "novice" administrators, often new to the school and, in most cases, new to the role.

16. We are indebted to Tim Mazzoni for (a) suggesting that we identify various "paths of influence" as a way to indicate how insider politics might influence implementation developments and (b) highlighting some ways to make these conceptual implications of the case more explicit.

17. Several staff members also voiced concerns, but their words of caution were not viewed as acts of resistance by the informants, or by the authors of this case study.

18. The difficulties of anticipating the problems policy can create, let alone designing policies to avert them, are discussed by many. See, especially, Gillon, 2000.

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CHAPTER 3

INTEREST GROUPS IN NATIONAL READING POLICY

Perceived Influence and Beliefs on Teaching Reading[1]

Mengli Song and Cecil Miskel

Drawing on interviews with 103 policy actors active in shaping national reading policy, we examined the levels of perceived influence of interest groups in the national reading policy arena, and their beliefs about reading instruction. Employing thematic analysis and analysis of variance, we found that interest group community in the national reading policy arena is not homogenous, but composed of groups of varying levels of perceived influence. Our study also reveals that among those interest groups and policymakers, support for a balanced approach is significantly stronger than support for phonics- or whole-language-only approaches to reading instruction. The findings from our study suggest that an assessment of various groups' influence is needed in order for policy actors to make sensible judgments in choosing policy allies or building coalitions for effective policy actions, and that a consensus about how reading should be taught has been emerging or may have already emerged in the national reading policy domain.

A sense of nervousness grew during the past decade about the reading performance of America's schoolchildren. Business leaders expressed concern that low levels of reading ability among the workforce was reducing America's international competitiveness; the public and policymakers lamented California's plunging reading scores on NAEP; and scholars pointed to the dire personal, social, and economic consequences of reading failure. Sensing a changing mood in the country, political leaders placed reading high on the policy agenda. Former President Clinton and then Secretary of Education Riley set as a top national priority that every child read well and independently by the third grade. Representative Bill Goodling (R-PA), former Chair of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, held hearings and mobilized his colleagues in the House of Representatives to address reading achievement. With reading moving to the top of the political agenda, reading specialists promoted alternative solutions and policymakers started creating program initiatives to address the reading problem. The two most prominent initiatives—the America Reads program announced by former President Clinton in 1996 and the Reading Excellence Act of 1998 initiated by then Representative Goodling (McDaniel, Sims, & Miskel, 2001)—represent the advent of a major policy change era in national reading policy. President Bush apparently will keep the window of change open because improving reading is included as a key component of his national education plan.

With the policy agenda for reading coming into flux, a growing number of interest groups and policymakers endeavored to sway reading policy with their favored answers. Indeed, reading policy is a hotbed of controversy because those involved in this policy arena agree that acquiring high reading skills is of fundamental importance to the well being of every individual, our society, and economic system, but on little else. Debates about reading policy are increasingly pervasive, intense, and polarized. Driven by a range of ideologies, personal experiences and conflicting research findings, parent advocacy groups, politicians across the political spectrum, professional and business associations, and academics are joining debates around a number of issues, e.g., the magnitude of the reading problem, pedagogy, standards and assessments.

The most polarizing conflict centers on beliefs about the best way to teach reading. While a number of approaches to teaching reading are available, the controversy is typically described with strong contentious terms—war metaphors pitting whole language against phonics. Calfee and Norman (1998, p. 244), for example, observe that, "A battle is raging . . . ." Phonics proponents argue that reading achievement is in perilous decline because schools rely on whole language methods in their reading programs. Whole language advocates counter that phonics uses boring drill and practice and delays children's access to real books. Firefights are ignited or fueled by a plethora of writers—for example, Adams (1990), Allington (1997), Chall (1996; 2000), Cheney (1997), Coles (1998), Finn (1995), Goodman (1986), Moats (2000), Shannon (1998), and Taylor (1998).

In this conflict-ridden policy arena dealing with an essential area of schooling, our knowledge about how reading policies develop is insufficient (Valencia & Wixson, 2000) and our understanding of the critical roles interest groups and their beliefs play in shaping educational policies is inadequate (Malen, 2001). To address these important needs, a twofold purpose guided our investigation—first, to learn the relative support by interest groups for different approaches to teaching reading; and second, to examine whether the beliefs of interest groups about teaching reading vary with their perceived level of influence.

CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVES

Interest Groups and Interests in Reading

Interest groups are membership organizations, advocacy organizations not accepting members, businesses, other organizations or institutions, or any association of individuals, policy actors or groups, whether formally organized or not, that try to influence public policy (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Hrebenar, 1997; Kollman, 1998; Sipple et al, 1997; Thomas & Hrebenar 1992). Hence, a wide variety of organizations qualify as interest groups in the reading policy arena, including K-12 and higher education associations and unions, parent and citizen groups, think tanks or policy institutes, government agencies, media, business, and foundations. Specific examples include the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Education Association (NEA), the Brookings Institution, International Reading Association (IRA), and Education Week. However, reading achievement, phonics, and whole language are not in themselves interests, but become interests when those caring about reading make demands on government to promote their values by means of public policy (e.g., Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Salisbury, 1991). As the focus on early reading intensifies, many values become interests and many private organizations become interest groups as they attempt to insure that their values are represented in the reading policy arena.

Beliefs and Battles about Teaching Reading

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993, 1999) theorize that the belief systems of advocacy groups are not only essential for their formation but also guide how interest groups perceive and act in political arena. In turn, group actions influence the responses of policymakers and the subsequent policy outcomes. A key set of beliefs in the policy arena of reading is about how reading should be taught, especially in the early grades. Phonics advocates call for explicit, direct and systematic skills instruction that emphasizes the alphabetic principle, phonemic awareness, word recognition, decoding, and the relationships between sounds and spelling (Adams, 1990; Chall, 1996). In contrast, whole language proponents underscore the importance of literature-based reading, meaning construction for purposeful functions, student-centeredness, teacher empowerment, and the naturalness of reading acquisition in reading instruction (Bergeron, 1990; Edelsky, 1993; Goodman, 1986; Weaver, 1994).

Chall (1996) chronicles the changing battle lines in the reading wars. Meaning and communication-based approaches dominated reading instruction for much of the 20th century. Whole word and sight methods reigned from the 1920s through the 1960s and whole language approaches during the 1980s and into the 1990s. From the late 1960s and the 1970s, phonological methods based on learning the alphabetic principle, that is, the relationships between letters and their sounds, came into wide usage and dominated the teaching of reading. Interest groups touting phonics include the Republican Party, the Christian Coalition, the American Family Association, and Eagle Forum (Burnett, 1998). According to Ravitch (2000) whole language built a large and committed following during the 1980s in schools of education and professional associations such as the IRA and National Council of Teachers of English. Moreover, whole language proponents won a major victory in 1987 when California adopted guidelines for teaching English that was driven by the tenets of whole language. During the past decade, a full-scale war for dominance raged between phonics and whole language believers and in a manner that Chall (2000) described as less reasoned than in earlier periods. Phonics advocates won major skirmishes during the 1990s when the 1992, 1994, and 1998 NAEP scores showed California dropping in reading achievement and the state rewrote its guidelines to emphasize phonemic awareness. Even some ardent proponents such as Wolfe and Poynor (2001) acknowledge the decline of whole language but attribute the problem to a campaign led by researchers, the popular media, and the religious right.

During different periods of the 20th century, either phonics or whole language dominated the way teachers taught reading. Whether in vogue or out, each side adamantly maintains its beliefs and concedes little to the other. Over the years many efforts have been made to integrate the two approaches. Hirsch (1996) observes that middle-of-the-road approaches are needed that use ideas from both phonics and whole language. Indeed, amid the vociferous arguments from the two opposing camps, calls for a truce have become increasingly strong during the late 1990s. For example, a report by the National Research Council (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) concludes that effective reading instruction integrates the best practices of different methods. The Learning First Alliance (1998), a collaborative of education associations, calls for complex approaches that include phonics instruction. Moreover, both the IRA and AFT reversed their official policies and specifically promote early phonics as part of a comprehensive reading program (Palmaffy, 1997). In addition, a number of scholars (e.g., Chall, 1996, Flippo, 1997; Lyon, 1998; Pressley, 1998; Stahl; 1992; Stanovich, 1990) argue that research evidence supports balancing or integrating decoding and comprehension skills with elements of whole language to create an effective and attractive early literacy curriculum. The various combinations of thoughtful and eclectic approaches to reading instruction go by a variety of names, including comprehensive, integrated, and individualized, but the most common term is balanced. While activists on both sides seem unwilling to truly entertain the other side's perspectives, powerful interests are talking compromise and consensus about how to teach reading. *Hence, Hypothesis 1 is that interest groups in the national reading policy arena voice significantly stronger support for balanced approaches to reading instruction than for phonics and whole-language approaches.*

Interest Group Influence and Beliefs

As a fundamental goal, interest groups strive to sway policymakers to include their beliefs into public policy. The extent of their success largely depends on the relative influence of the groups. By definition then, the beliefs of groups perceived as being more influential by policymakers carry more weight in the policymaking process than the beliefs of those perceived as less influential. An important question then becomes—do interest groups of different levels of influence hold different beliefs about how to teach reading; and if they do, how do their beliefs differ? Current literature suggests that influence of policy actors may be linked to their beliefs through the social network locations of the actors.

Influence, Perceived Influence, and Network Location

Influence is a fundamental dimension of power. As Knoke (1990) observes, it occurs when one actor intentionally transmits information to another that alters the other's actions from what would have occurred without that information. Phrased somewhat differently, Bacharach and Mundell (1993) define influence as the informal dimension of power, consisting of attempts to persuade those with authority to make the decision one way. While also acknowledging influence and power as inseparable, Pfeffer (1992) views influence and politics as the processes, the actions, and the behaviors through which potential power is utilized and realized.

Playing a crucial role in organizational behavior, power and influence originate from a multitude of sources, such as money; political, organizational, and managerial skill; membership size; geographical distribution; group image or standing; membership attributes; coalitions; and member cohesion and dedication (Etzioni, 1964; Greenwald, 1977; Rosenthal, 1998). It is virtually impossible to identify an exhaustive list of all factors that contribute to group influence. Even if such a list could be constructed, it would still be impossible to specify precisely the equation for calculating group influence based on the set of factors, especially when we take into account the dynamic, transitory, and situation/context-specific nature of power and influence (Greenwald, 1977; Knoke, 1990; Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997).

Indeed, the measurement of the slippery albeit crucial concept of influence has been troubling social scientists for decades and has been regarded as a methodological challenge of the highest order. Baumgartner and Leech (1998) observe that studies designed around the false premise that we can observe the actions of influence and power are doomed to fail because they are intended to measure the un-measurable

Examining perceived influence instead of influence itself not only makes the task methodologically more feasible, but also has logical appeal. After all, any influence from interest groups must be first mediated through policymakers before it can have an impact on policy decisions. Arguably, policymakers' perception of influence rather than influence per se is what really counts. Moreover, group influence perceived by other groups may also have implications for coalition building among the groups. Hence, for the purpose of this study, p *erceived influence* is defined as the relative power that a group possesses in the perceptions of policymakers or other interest groups. By using standard interview schedules, we contend that this concept can be captured in a relatively simple and straightforward manner without losing its substantive relevance.

Beyond its own resources and membership characteristics, an interest group's influence also depends on its location in the social network in which it is embedded. Knoke (1990), for instance, asserts that network centrality is synonymous with influence, for the greater number of network ties empowers central actors by giving them access to valuable information on conditions, opportunities, and constraints. Actors on the periphery of the network, on the other hand, are relegated to less influential positions because they lack adequate quantities and qualities of information.

Social network analysts have demonstrated repeatedly the association between network location and influence as well as perceived influence. Both Laumann and Pappi (1976) and Galaskiewicz (1979), for example, found that the more central the organization, the greater its "influence reputation" (i.e., perceived influence) in community affairs or in a functional area. Many other researchers have also detected a positive association between centrality and influence or perceived influence (e.g., Boje & Whetten, 1981; Knoke, 1983; Laumann & Knoke with Kim, 1987; Marsden & Laumann, 1977; Miller, 1980; Perrucci & Lewis, 1989). Although some researchers suggest that the association between centrality and influence may depend on the nature of the network and the system under study and the way centrality is measured, they note that most studies have revealed at least some substantively meaningful association between the two (Mizruchi, 1994; Mizruchi & Galaskiewicz, 1994).

Network location and beliefs

Network location is not only associated with policy actors' influence, but also with their beliefs. Such cognition is related to social context in at least two ways (Pattison, 1994). First, relations in social networks serve as channels for the transmission of information. Therefore, an actor's location in a social network determines, at least in part, the specific information to which the actor is exposed and hence the cognitions that use such information. Second, social locale is related to certain regular patterns of social interaction, which is a "driving force" behind knowledge acquisition (Carley, 1986).

In short, the above arguments suggest that, because network ties serve as channels of communication, the information individuals receive and the knowledge they construct depend on their location in the social network (Pattison, 1994). In support of the arguments, Knoke (1990; 1994) observes that centrally located actors differ from peripherally located actors in both the quantity and quality of information accessible to them, for the former can tap into larger stores of information through their dense connections to other actors. It follows that actors embedded in different network locales may form different perceptions and beliefs due to the difference in both information availability and influence from their regular social contacts.

Another interpretation of the cognitive difference across network locations stems from research on innovation diffusion. While some diffusion studies show that early innovators are central actors, other studies indicate that early innovators are marginal and that they "underconform to norms to such a degree that they are perceived as highly deviant"(Rogers, 1962, p.197). To explain the phenomenon, Becker (1970) contends that central actors have a greater desire to protect their professional reputation and therefore less likely to adopt an innovation early on if the innovation is perceived as being risky or controversial. If the innovation is thought to be safe and uncontroversial, central actors are more likely to lead its adoption.

Mizruchi and Fein (1999) provide a concrete example of how network centrality affects people's cognition. By studying the uses of coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphism, they found that organizational researchers give disproportionate attention to one component of DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) classic piece on institutional isomorphism—mimetic isomorphism, which conforms to the prevalent discourse in the field. More importantly, they found that centrally located organizational researchers are more likely than other scholars to invoke this dominant interpretation of DiMaggio and Powell's work. Given that a dominant discourse is likely to gain its legitimacy only when it is adopted by socially central actors (Strang & Soule, 1998), Mizruchi and Fein argue that researchers occupying central positions in disciplinary social networks are more likely to adopt conceptions that accord with the dominant discourse in the field, for they have more access and hence more exposure to the dominant discourse, which is disseminated informally through social networks as much as through direct contact with the original work. Conversely, peripherally located researchers are less conversant with the dominant discourse and therefore more likely to hold non-dominant or more literal views about a work.

Given the relationship between network location and influence or perceived influence, and the relationship between network location and beliefs, we postulate that the beliefs of policy actors are also related to their perceived influence. In an earlier study using the same dataset, we found that policymakers distinguished three significantly different levels of influence for the 67 interest groups in the national reading policy arena, and interest groups distinguished two different levels of influence for the 67 groups (Song, Miskel, Young, & McDaniel, 2000). Based on this finding and the foregoing conceptual rationale, *Hypothesis 2 is that interest groups with different levels of perceived influence in the national reading policy arena have significantly different beliefs about phonics, whole language, and balanced methods of teaching reading.*

METHODOLOGY

Sample

We first compiled a preliminary list of interest groups and policy organizations with substantive concerns in shaping national reading policy through systematic searches of the literature, archival documents, the Internet, and the Congressional Information Service; and through consultations with knowledgeable informants. At least one individual from each group or organization was included in the initial sample, with the most likely candidates being the heads of the organizations or directors of government relations.

To increase the coverage of the reading policy domain and to ensure that important members of the reading policy community were included in our study, the initial sample was supplemented by a snowball sampling technique (Heinz et al., 1993; Kingdon, 1995). That is, during the interviews, individuals were asked to identify other key individuals and groups in setting national reading policy. Thus additional policy actors were identified and the initial sample was expanded. In all, 118 individuals were identified as of substantive importance in national reading policy, and were invited to participate in the study. Eleven people declined for various reasons, and 107 participated in the study, with a response rate of 90.7 percent.

Among the 107 participants, 4 are individual policy actors not affiliated with any interest group or policymaking body at the national level, and were therefore excluded from the study. The final sample consists of 103 out of 118 (87.3 percent) policy actors, with 74 representing 67 interest groups, 31 representing 20 government agencies, and 2 representing both interest groups and government agencies. The 67 interest groups cover a broad spectrum of organizations, ranging from teacher unions and professional associations to think tanks and the media. Examples include AFT, NEA, American Educational Research Association, the Heritage Foundation, the Christian Coalition, and Education Week. The 20 governmental agencies are mainly Senate and House committees and offices in the U.S. Department of Education.

Data Collection and Management

We used structured interviews as the primary data collection method. The interviews, averaging about 30-45 minutes, were guided by two standard, open-ended schedules: one for interest group members and the other for policymakers. Of the 107 participants, 55 were interviewed in person, 50 via telephone, and two responded to the interview questions via email. All the interviews except the email responses were tape recorded and transcribed. In order to guarantee confidentiality, the names of the interviewees and the organizations they represent were removed from the transcripts and replaced with randomly assigned numerical codes before being stored in an electronic database.

Measurement

We employed thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) to capture the qualitative richness of the interview data. A scheme of thematic codes was developed to map onto the major concepts examined in this study. A detailed explanation follows for how the categories were developed and the data coded.

Perceived Influence

For the purpose of this study, we draw upon the findings from our previous study on perceived influence of the 67 interest groups in national reading policy arena (Song, et al., 2000). Measuring perceived influence of each interest group as the number of times the group was mentioned as being most influential/ powerful/effective subtracted by the number of times the group was mentioned as being least influential/powerful/effective, Song et al. found that the 67 groups are of three distinct influence levels based on policymakers' perception and of two distinct influence levels based on interest groups' perceptions.

Beliefs About Teaching Reading

We created three themes for interest group beliefs about the most appropriate approach to teaching reading: Phonics, Whole Language, and Balanced Approach. These represent the three currently dominant strands of beliefs about how to teach reading. To further delineate people's attitudes towards phonics and whole language, four sub-themes were created within each: "Not Included," "Neutral," "Included," and "Primary Basis." These reflect an increasing degree of emphasis on phonics or whole language and were assigned ascending values of 1 to 4. For each respondent, an average score was calculated for the phonics and the whole language themes respectively. As an example, if in a transcript, no statements were coded as "Phonics—Not Included" or "Phonics—Neutral," two statements coded as "Phonics—Included," and three statements coded as "Phonics-Primary Basis," then this respondent's score for the phonics approach would be the average score of the five statements he or she made regarding the phonics theme: $[(2 \times 3) + (3 \times 4)]/5 = 3.6$. This value would then serve as an index for this respondent's belief on phonics, which is assumed to represent his or her group's belief. For groups with more than one interviewee, individual values of each theme were averaged to calculate the value for the groups.

Based on codings of the "Phonic-Primary Basis" and "Whole-Language-Primary Basis" sub-themes, we further created two dummy variables to indicate whether an organization supports the phonics-only or the whole-language-only approach to reading instruction. A third dummy variable labeled "Balanced" was also created. The data suggest that the respondents' views on balanced approaches of reading instruction were straightforward and clear-cut. Hence, no sub-themes were created under balanced approaches.

Reliability of Coding

To ensure an acceptable degree of coding reliability, we checked both intra-coder and inter-coder reliability using the formula recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994): Coder reliability = number of agreements/ (total number of agreements + disagreements). The inter-coder reliabilities for the themes perceived influence, phonics, whole language, and balanced approaches turned out to be 96.6 percent, 80.0 percent, 85.0

percent, and 87.0 percent respectively. The intra-coder reliabilities are substantially higher, ranging from 95 percent to 100 percent.

Analytic Methods

To test Hypothesis 1, we performed paired-samples t-tests to compare support for the balanced, phonics and whole-language approaches to reading instruction among the 67 interest groups. To test Hypothesis 2, we conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine whether interest groups in the three distinct influence categories based on policymakers' perceptions differed significantly in their beliefs about the three methods of teaching reading; we also performed independent-samples t-test to examine whether groups in the two distinct influence categories based on interest groups' perceptions differed significantly in their beliefs about the three methods to teach reading.

RESULTS

Beliefs about Teaching Reading

Table 1 provides the means of policy actors' beliefs on different methods of teaching reading. As shown in Table 1, the mean "Phonics-average" index for interest groups is 2.83 on a scale from 1 to 4, with 1 representing "Phonics-Not Included" and 4 "Phonics-Primary Basis." This index indicates that as a whole, interest groups' beliefs about phonics can be described as phonics should be included in reading instruction, but should not be the primary or exclusive basis of reading instruction. Similarly, these groups believe that whole language should also be included in reading instruction—but not in an exclusive manner.

TABLE 1
Means of Policy Actors' Beliefs on Reading Instructional Approach

Reading Instructional Approach	*Interest groups(N = 67)*	*Policymakers(N = 20)*
Phonics-average	2.83	2.95
Phonics-only dummy	.07	.15
Whole-Language-average	2.70	2.80
Whole-Language-only dummy	.01	.10
Balanced	.81	.85

TABLE 2

Paired-samples Test Results for Differences in Support for Different Reading Instructional Approaches among Interest Groups (N = 67)

Pair	*Paired Differences Mean*	*t*	*df*	*Sig.*
Phonics-only dummy vs. Balanced	-.73	-11.10	66	.000
Whole-Language-only dummy vs. Balanced	-.79	-15.81	66	.000

Consistent with the implications of the mean "Phonics-average" index and the mean "Whole Language-average" index, the means of "Phonics-only dummy" and "Whole-Language- only dummy" indicate that very few groups believe that phonics or whole language should be the exclusive basis for reading instruction. Specifically, only 7 percent of the groups stated that phonics should be the primary basis of reading instruction, and only 1 percent stated that whole language should be the primary basis, with the majority of the groups (81 percent) supporting balanced approaches to teaching reading. The results are similar for the beliefs of policymakers.

To test Hypothesis 1, we performed paired-samples t-tests to examine whether support for balanced approaches to reading instruction is significantly stronger than support for extreme views on reading instruction (i.e., phonics-only and whole-language-only approaches) among the 67 interest groups. The results are listed in Table 2.

Apparently, interest groups' support for balanced approaches is significantly stronger than their support for either the phonics-only or whole-language-only approaches to reading instruction ($p < .001$). Specifically, 73 percent more groups supported balanced approaches than phonics-only approaches, and 79 percent more groups supported balanced approaches than whole-language-only approaches among the 67 groups. Similar results were also obtained for policymakers' beliefs. Hypothesis 1 thus holds.

Perceived Influence and Beliefs about Teaching Reading

Song et al. (2000) found that interest groups in the national reading policy arena fall into three distinct influence categories based on policymakers' perceptions: 4 groups are of low influence level, 50 groups of moderate influence level, and 13 groups of high influence level. Interest groups, however, only distinguished two distinct influence levels: 45 groups are of low-moderate influence and 22 groups are of high influence based on interest groups' perceptions.

TABLE 3
ANOVA Results for Differences in Beliefs on Reading Instructional Approach between Groups with Different Levels of Influence Based on Policymakers' Perceptions

		df	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
Phonics	Between Groups	2	.01	.08	.91
	Within Groups	62	.17		
	Total	64			
Whole Language	Between Groups	2	.21	.83	.44
	Within Groups	60	.26		
	Total	62			
Balanced	Between Groups	2	.20	1.29	.28
	Within Groups	64	.16		
	Total	66			

To test Hypothesis 2, we first conducted an ANOVA to examine whether interest groups in the low, moderate, and high influence categories based on policymakers' perceptions differ significantly in their beliefs about the three methods of teaching reading. The results are shown in Table 3.

The results, summarized in Table 3, suggest that interest groups with different levels of influence as perceived by policymakers are not significantly different in their beliefs on any of the three approaches to teaching reading ($p > .10$). Independent-samples t-test results similarly indicate that interest groups in the low-moderate influence category do not differ significantly from groups in the high influence category based on interest groups' perceptions in terms of their beliefs on phonics, whole language, and balanced methods of reading instruction ($p > .10$) (see Table 4). Thus, Hypothesis 2 is rejected. Contrary to our prediction, our analyses suggest

TABLE 4
T-Test Results for Differences in Beliefs on Reading Instructional Approach between Groups with Different Levels of Influence Based on Interest Groups' Perceptions

	Mean Difference	*t*	*Sig.*
Phonics	-.10	-.95	.34
Whole Language	-.21	-1.50	.13
Balanced	-.12	-1.00	.30

that interest groups with different levels of perceived influence hold similar beliefs about how to teach reading.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Beliefs about Teaching Reading

The findings indicate that overall, interest groups believe that both phonics and whole language should be included in reading instruction, but neither should be the exclusive basis. Our analyses also confirmed the hypothesis that support for balanced approaches is significantly stronger than support for phonics-only or whole-language-only approaches among interest groups; similar findings were also obtained for policymakers. The findings indicate that pedagogical extremists no longer dominate the beliefs of the reading policy community. Although a minority of interest groups still possessed an either/or mentality, over 80 percent of the policy actors in reading stayed away from the two extreme camps and positioned themselves somewhere in between. The following typical response favoring a middle-of-the-road approach came from an interest group member:

> Good reading instruction teaches kids to read, drawing on some of the necessary word deciphering skills that you get from phonics and phonemes and drawing heavily on whole language in storybook reading. Neither works alone.

One explanation of these findings is that the reading wars are over and that the powerful forces of moderation and integration as exemplified by the National Research Council have forged wide spread agreement. Given the long duration and intense polarization of the reading wars and the continuing publication of aggressive tracts, however, the sudden agreement around balanced approaches may seem somewhat hollow. An alternative explanation of why balanced approaches have gained ascendancy in the realm of reading policy is found in the analogy of color-changing chameleons. If there is a perception that balanced approaches are becoming the dominant discourse in the field—a likely perception given that many prominent voices have been advocating for balanced approaches—very few grants or consultant positions would go to those who are seen as outside the mainstream in terms of reading instructional approach. It might be that in order to be perceived as socially and politically acceptable rather than deviant, some policy actors simply act like political chameleons, which 'change their colors' to conform to the dominant discourse. Taking on the mantle of a balanced approach as a political necessity, policy actors, like chameleons, can secure the benefits associated with being in the mainstream by overtly espousing balanced approaches, while covertly still entertaining extreme views. As more political chameleons have assumed the color of balanced approaches, balanced approaches have been reinforced as the dominant discourse in the field, which has in turn attracted more chameleons to change colors and to join the mainstream. Another explanation is that nebulous or individual definitions of balanced approaches simply paper over the differences and the basic conflicts remain as salient as ever. For example, Moats (2000) contends that balanced reading instruction is just whole language in disguise.

In short, our findings suggest that the turbulence created by the clash between phonics and whole language proponents in the reading policy community has subsided appreciably—at least on the surface, and that balanced approaches to teaching reading have emerged as the most acceptable solutions to the reading problem. Such developments actually fit very well with Kingdon's (1995) argument about the generation of policy ideas. Kingdon contends that the development of policy alternatives are guided more by recombination–recombining familiar elements into new proposals–than rational problem solving. This process of perpetual recombination of existing ideas produces alternative solutions whose origins might be difficult to trace, but solutions that have a broader-based appeal than the original ideas. In our case, the balanced approaches of reading instruction can be seen as growing out of the phonics and whole language perspectives, but these relatively new ideas apparently enjoy much greater popularity and receptivity than the original ideas among policy actors and possibly among the warring armies as well.

Perceived Influence and Beliefs about Teaching Reading

With regard to the relationship between perceived influence and beliefs about teaching reading, we predicted that interest groups with higher levels of perceived influence occupy more central network locations, and therefore have different beliefs from groups with lower levels of perceived influence because of the difference in information availability. However, our findings suggest that this is not necessarily the case. We found that despite the differential levels of perceived influence, interest groups hold similar beliefs on phonics, whole language, and balanced methods of teaching reading.

To interpret the homogeneity of beliefs across groups with different levels of perceived influence, we draw on Heclo's (1978) notion of issue networks. Heclo asserts that with the growth in the government bureaucracy and the interest group system, policymaking is no longer dominated by small circles or closed "iron triangles" of participants, but takes place within relatively open issue networks. Issue networks are communication webs of people knowledgeable about some policy area and frequently include government officials, legislators, business people, lobbyists, academics, and journalists (McFarland, 1992). A distinct feature about issue networks is that they are "shared-knowledge" groups; and those in the networks are likely to have a common language, information base, and understanding about some problem of public policy (Heclo, 1978, p. 103). Although Heclo cautions that shared knowledge does not necessarily produce agreement, it is reasonable to assume that shared knowledge and information is conducive to consensus building.

In the reading policy domain, the 67 interest groups we identified are likely to be important members of the issue networks in reading. According to Heclo (1978), communications among the network members provide them with a common information base and shared knowledge about reading policy issues. Conceivably, with the development of modern information technologies such as e-mail, the Internet, and fax machines, such communications have become even more efficient and effective; and the circulation of information and the spread of ideas within the issue networks have also become faster and more far-reaching than ever before. Hence, it is understandable that despite the century-long reading wars, the dominant discourse pervading the networks of reading policy actors is now about balanced approaches to teaching reading.

Actually, the notion of issue networks is not necessarily in conflict with arguments about the relationship between network location and beliefs (Knoke, 1990, 1994; Pattison, 1994). It might be the case that when the density of communication ties exceeds a certain threshold in a network, even those with relatively sparse ties (i.e., less central and less influential actors) would have adequate access to channels of information flow and therefore encounter little restraint in accessing information and ideas circulating within the network. If the network is rather loosely connected, on the other hand, network location might then make a difference in terms of information availability and consequently policy actor beliefs.

In conclusion, as reading has become a mainstay in the political agenda, this study—dealing with the perceived influence and beliefs of interest groups in the national reading policy arena—is both timely and significant. It represents an initial empirical effort to a better understanding of a central force—interest groups—in educational policymaking. Building upon the findings of the current study, future research in reading and other education policy arenas should further explore issues such as interest group beliefs on other contemporary reading issues (e.g., levels of reading achievement, standards, and assessment) and how certain beliefs or policy ideas diffuse in education policy networks. In short, the findings of this study have substantial potential to enrich our limited knowledge of the policymaking process in education in general and in reading in particular, and ultimately contribute to the success of policy actions in enhancing the early reading achievement among the nation's children in the new millennium.

NOTE

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CHAPTER 4

BRIDGING AND BUFFERING PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

Managing Exchanges of Social and Cultural Resources[1]

Rodney T. Ogawa and Susan Clark Studer

Informed by concepts drawn from a contingency theory of organizations, this exploratory study examines the ways in which two elementary schools manage relations with students' parents. The findings suggest that contingency theory provides a heuristic that generally illuminates school-family relations. Because schools depend on parents to provide important resources, they bridge to parents by communicating, co-opting, bargaining, contracting, coaching and serving. Because parents can also pose three types of uncertainty—diversity of family backgrounds, instability and threat—the schools buffer parent influence by coding inputs and limiting access. However, the findings also suggest that the resources that schools depend on families to provide and, hence, the strategies that schools employ to manage relations with parents diverge in important ways from contingency theory. The schools chiefly depend on parents to provide socio-cultural, not material, resources. Thus, the schools utilize strategies—such as communication—that rely on teachers, more than administrators or school-level programs, to shape rather than diminish their dependence on parents. Moreover, the cases suggest that mismatches between the socio-cultural order of schools and the socio-cultural resources of some parents, particularly those from low income or minority ethno-linguistic backgrounds or both, can severely compromise the capacity of schools to engage those parents.

INTRODUCTION

A growing body of research reveals the influence that parents exert on student outcomes, including grades and standardized achievement test scores. Consequently, educational reformers promote programs aimed at bolstering the involvement of parents in schools, while researchers continue to study the relationship between parent involvement and student achievement.

Research on family-school relations clearly has made important advances. However, it has two related limitations. First, researchers have paid considerable attention to the impact of socio- and psycho-dynamics of families on student performance (e.g., Cairney & Munsey, 1995; Milne, Myers, Rosenthal & Ginsburg, 1986), the influence of social class on parent involvement (Lareau, 1989), and the relationships between teachers' attitudes, their efforts to work with parents and parent involvement (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Epstein & Becker, 1982). With rare exceptions (e.g., Corwin & Wagenaar, 1976; Henry, 1996), research has ignored how the organization of schools can affect family-school relations.

Second, research does not distinguish between the advantages and potential disadvantages of parent involvement. While teachers and administrators are generally quick to note the difficulties that meddling parents can pose (Goldring, 1986), the academic literature reflects the sentiment that parent involvement in schools is an unmixed blessing: More is always better. For example, in her recent synthesis of the literature Epstein (1995) identifies types of parental involvement, practices that schools presently employ to encourage each type of involvement, challenges posed by each type of involvement and then redefines each type with an eye to broadening the scope of parental involvement. Her focus clearly is on enhancing and even expanding parent involvement in schools.

We attempt to address both of these limitations in this study. We attend to the first by employing a conceptual framework from organization theory. That framework enables us to deal with the second because it explains that organizations, such as schools, both bridge to and buffer against their external environments.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Organization theory incorporates widely varying perspectives, which emphasize different features of organizations. For instance, a cultural perspective highlights how values and beliefs and their artifactual and ritual representations mold internal solidarity and gain external legitimacy; a political perspective emphasizes how conflict arises from contests among coalitions over both what goals organizations should pursue and the means for attaining them. The framework that guides the present study draws from contingency theory, which is rooted in the assumption that organizations are technically rational. That is, organizations develop structures to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of their technical cores, which is that part of an organization that transforms inputs into the organization's principal outputs (Thompson, 1967). Organizations erect structures that manage relations both among internal actors and with the external environment in order to minimize uncertainties, which compromise technical effectiveness and efficiency (Aldrich, 1979).

Organizations, usually top-level management, negotiate environmental relations in two ways. First, they extend bridges when they are dependent on their environments for resources to fuel their core technologies. Dependency can foster uncertainty about the availability of necessary resources (Scott, 1992; Thompson, 1967). Environmental conditions that affect the level of dependency include scarcity of resources, concentration of resources, and the degree to which sources of inputs are coordinated. Organizations employ several bridging strategies, including bargaining, contracting and co-opting. Second, organizations buffer their core technologies to protect them from environmental uncertainties such as the predictability and stability of resources (Thompson, 1967). Conditions that present uncertainty include heterogeneity of inputs, instability of sources of inputs and threat. To manage the impact of uncertainty, organizations employ buffering strategies, which include stockpiling; leveling, or smoothing the flow of resources; and coding, or classifying inputs prior to their introduction to the technical core.

In viewing schools as organizations, scholars generally have operated on the assumption that the central function of schools is to socialize students morally and technically (Bidwell, 1965). Consequently, scholars generally have treated classroom instruction, or teaching, as the technical core of school organizations (Barr & Dreeben, 1983). Similarly, they view students' families as crucial and immediate elements of schools' external environments because families are both the source of schools' most important inputs, students, and clients whose children receive the services of schools. Parents also provide other resources to support their children's education, such as providing school supplies, participating in school activities and helping with homework. Given the important role that families play in the schooling of their children, then, contingency theory focuses attention on the extent to which and how school organizations a) create bridges between classroom instruction and families, namely parents, to regularize the flow of resources and b) build buffers between classroom instruction and parents to diminish the impact of uncertainties that families might introduce (Ogawa, 1998).

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

Previous studies of schools and their relations with parents, while generally not guided by contingency theory, have produced findings suggesting that school organizations do bridge and buffer relations with their students' families. The present study seeks to build on these findings by explicitly examining the extent to which these strategies are practiced and the conditions in which they occur.

The findings of research on parent involvement in schools reflect the use of bridging strategies by schools to manage relations with parents. It is clear that schools confront conditions that give rise to the use of bridging. As Litwak, Meyer and Mickelson (1974) observe, for schools to become more effective they must close the "distance" to families. Schools are dependent on parents to provide resources that affect the academic performance of students. For example, parent involvement in school is positively associated with students' grades, while parent engagement in education-related activities at home is a predictor of students' standardized achievement test scores (Schneider & Coleman, 1993). Teachers recognize their dependence, relying on parents to read to their children, support teachers and respond to teachers' requests (Lareau, 1989).

Research also documents that educators use several bridging strategies (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Epstein, 1990; Epstein, 1995) to manage relations with families. Districts and schools organize programs to enhance communication with families, involve parents on school councils, provide parent effectiveness workshops and dispense health and social services. Teachers encourage parents to read to their children, discuss school with their children, monitor their children's completion of homework assignments, engage in education-related activities such as visiting the local public library and the like.

Research on family-school relations does not directly attend to the issue of buffering. Nonetheless, studies shed light on the use of buffering strategies by schools. Sarason (1995) notes plainly that schools set rigid boundaries around themselves.

Research suggests that conditions requiring buffering are present. Families can be a source of uncertainty for school organizations. The uncertainty takes two general forms. First, teachers have struggled to develop a distinctive technology in the pursuit of professional status and thus are reluctant to have parents interfere with their professional discretion (Henry, 1996). Research suggests that parents, particularly those who are well educated and have middle-class backgrounds, are sometimes perceived by teachers as intruding into their domain by insisting on or questioning particular practices or programs (Chavkin & Williams, 1987; Davies, 1987; Epstein & Becker, 1982; Goldring, 1986; Litwak, Meyer & Mickelson, 1974). Second, families present schools with uncertainty in the form of both heterogeneity and instability. Research documents that schools in the United States are confronting larger numbers of students from low-income and ethnically, racially and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Coleman, 1987; Swap, 1993). Other studies record the high mobility rates of families and the changing composition of families (Hoffer & Coleman, 1990; Swap, 1993).

Research also provides some evidence of the use of buffering strategies by schools in response to these potential sources of uncertainty. Teachers want parents to respect and defer to their professional expertise and authority (Lareau, 1989; Henry 1996). They expect principals to shield them from undue parental influence, and principals fulfill what they perceive to be an important function (Goldring, 1986; 1990; 1995). To parents, these practices make schools appear to practice a "closed door" policy (Litwak, Meyer & Mickelson, 1974).

Studies also reveal that schools distance themselves from low-income and ethnically and racially diverse parents (Litwak, Meyer & Mickelson, 1974). Teachers believe that parents, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, are apathetic or lack the competence to support their children in school (Cairney & Munsie, 1995). According to some scholars, this stems from the largely middle-class and Eurocentric culture that permeates public schools (Henry, 1996), leaving parents from low-income and minority culture backgrounds insufficient cultural capital to engage with school (Smrekar, 1996). Moreover, a large body of research documents the use of grouping strategies by schools and teachers, which suggests that schools code inputs. While grouping is usually and arguably based on student ability or interest, it can also reflect differences in family background. For example, Rist (1970) reveals that, beginning as early as kindergarten, teachers group students by socio-economic background. Oakes (1985) similarly demonstrates that educational tracks correlate with social class.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is exploratory. We examine the extent to which and the ways in which two schools are organized to bridge and buffer relations between their core technology, or classroom instruction, and their immediate external environment, or families, by bridging and buffering. In addition, we seek to determine instances where schools depart from contingency explanations regarding organizations' bridging and buffering practices. Specifically, we sought to answer the following questions:

1. How and under what conditions do schools extend bridges to parents?

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2. How and under what conditions do schools buffer relations with parents?
3. In what ways do schools' efforts to bridge and buffer the involvement of parents diverge from contingency theory?

PROCEDURES

To answer these questions, exploratory, comparative case studies were conducted. The case study method is appropriate for determining the how and why of phenomena (Yin, 1989). This study sought to determine how and why schools and the individuals who work in them bridge and buffer the involvement of parents. Moreover, the case studies can reveal how people and systems struggle with complex issues, such as family-school relations (Stake, 1995).

Site Selection

The study was conducted in two elementary schools in a medium-sized school district in Southern California, which includes 11 elementary schools, 3 intermediate schools, 2 comprehensive high schools, 1 continuation school and 1 adult school. The two schools were selected because their students are ethnically diverse, a condition that might contribute to the types of strategies employed by schools in managing relations with parents. In addition, we selected schools that differed in terms of the socioeconomic backgrounds of their students' families, because previous research suggests that schools have different relations with less affluent families than they do with more affluent families.

Data Sources and Collection

Three types of data were collected and analyzed: documents, interviews and observations. Documents were collected that reflect the involvement of parents in the schools. These documents include the following: calendars, newsletters, meeting agendas, budgets, announcements, samples of teacher handouts, and letters from the principal, teachers, the PTA president and others attempting to contact parents.

The researchers interviewed the principals, regular classroom teachers (see site descriptions for specifics) and secretaries of both schools. In addition, a purposive sample of parents in each school was interviewed. With the input of the principals, the researchers selected and interviewed 4 parents in each of the following categories in each school: heavily involved in school activities (parents who serve as leaders in parent organization or serve on site councils or as volunteers), supportive of school activities (parents who participate in parent organizations, attend parent nights) and uninvolved in school activities (parents who do not participate in school activities other than parent-teacher conferences). All interviews were conducted individually. Staff members were interviewed on the school site. Parents were interviewed in their homes. At one school a bilingual aide translated interviews of Spanish speaking parents; at the second school a parent volunteer served in that role. Interview questions focused on topics related to the research questions.

The researchers observed a variety of activities held before, during and after school, which were intended to encourage parent involvement, including the following: family night, school programs, school picnics, site council and PTA meetings, bilingual advisory committee meetings, and the like. During these activities, researchers paid particular attention to who was present, what was said, the communication patterns and seating arrangements.

Data Analysis

We employed conventional procedures for analyzing field data. Initially, we coded interview responses, observations and documents according to categories suggested by the theoretical framework. For example, teacher practices or school programs were coded as representing instances of bridging or buffering. We also identified emergent categories and coded data accordingly. For example, teacher practices and school programs were coded as representing instances of bridging not noted in the theoretical framework, such as communicating and coaching. As coding proceeded, we compiled interpretive memos, resulting in a series of propositions regarding patterns in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1984). A major set of propositions involved the association of environmental conditions and teacher and school responses. For example, we noted that student and family ethnic background was associated with the types of bridging strategies employed by schools and teachers. In another instance, we observed that, when teachers were confronted with diversity among students, they employed a common coping, or buffering, mechanism: heterogeneous grouping. Analysis then moved through continuous cycles of producing findings and searching for confirming and disconfirming evidence (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After cases for each school were compiled separately, we compared the findings for systematic differences.

FINDINGS

In reporting our findings, we directly compare the two schools. We begin by describing and contrasting the school settings, including the communities they serve, their staffs and students and their instructional organization. We then turn to a comparison of the conditions that foster bridging and buffering at the two sites. Finally, we contrast the bridging and buffering strategies that the schools employ.

The Settings

On the surface, the two schools that participated in this study are quite similar in many respects: they serve diverse populations, have qualified and highly experienced staffs and operate on multi-track, year-round schedules. However, important and sometimes subtle differences distinguish the schools, differences that have implications for the ways in which the schools bridge and buffer their relations with parents.

The Communities

Hillview and La Mesa Schools serve ethnically diverse communities, both of which include the following groups: African-American, Asian-American, Latino/Chicano, Filipino and White. However, in other ways, the two communities are quite different.

Hillview School first opened its doors just six years prior to the beginning of this study. It is situated in a new and growing area of housing tracts aimed at middle to upper-middle income families. Homes in these tracts are rapidly being purchased by dual-income, dual-profession families. Although many of Hillview's students live in the new developments, the school also serves students from lower income families who reside in apartments, older and smaller single-family dwellings, mobile home parks and multi-family houses on the perimeter of the attendance zone. Many of the parents in the newer tracts are professionals who commute long distances to jobs in the next county. Consequently, a substantial number of Hillview's students are, as some teachers noted, "latch-key" children.

In contrast, La Mesa Elementary School is a fixture in the working-class community it has served for over thirty years. Although there are some newer homes in the vicinity, the school is surrounded by older, established neighborhoods of lower to medium-priced housing. The community includes a large and growing number of Latino families, many of whom speak Spanish at home. Homes in the area are primarily one story. Streets surrounding the school are paved; however there are no sidewalks.

The Staffs

The faculty and staffs of the two schools are quite similar with a few notable differences: a higher proportion of Hillview's teachers hold advanced degrees, while La Mesa's faculty includes twice as many resource specialists despite its smaller enrollment.

When Hillview opened six years prior to the beginning of this study, teachers were selected from other schools in the district, resulting in a highly experienced and accomplished faculty. The faculty includes 40 classroom teachers, one resource specialist and a teacher on special assignment who serves as an assistant principal both at Hillside and another school. Classified personnel include a librarian, 7 instructional support aides, 1 secretary, 2 clerks, 2.5 custodians, 4 campus supervisors and 1 food service worker. A nurse, psychologist, speech and language specialist, music instructor, counselors and other support people who rotate between several schools serve the school. The majority of Hillview teachers hold Master's degrees, and an unusually large number are or have been Mentor Teachers. Hillview's principal, Mrs. Lois Meyer, has worked in the district for 18 years. She began her career teaching home economics and English in an intermediate school. Mrs. Meyer served as a high school assistant principal for five years. One year ago, she was named Hillview's second principal. Mrs. Meyer is completing an Ed.D. in educational administration.

La Mesa Elementary School's faculty includes a principal, 27 classroom teachers and 2 resource teachers. In addition, a music teacher and speech teacher rotate among several schools. The classified staff includes 7 instructional support aides, 1 secretary, 1 half-time clerical aide, 2.2 custodians, 4 campus supervisors and 1 food service worker. A nurse, a psychologist, 2 speech and language specialists, counselors and other support people who rotate throughout schools in the district serve the school. Thirty-four percent of La Mesa's teachers hold Master's Degrees, and most of the teachers have completed course work beyond that required for the bachelor's degree and teaching credential. The district has employed La Mesa's principal, Steven Borlan, for 12 years, five years as principal at La Mesa and prior to that as a district staff development coordinator. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees in English and an Ed.D. in educational administration.

The Students and Class Organization

Although newer, Hillview is much larger than La Mesa. Hillview serves 1222 students, while La Mesa enrolls 809, including one special day class for students with learning disabilities. In terms of socio-economic backgrounds, data suggest that Hillview's students generally come from more prosperous families. Nonetheless, 21 percent of Hillview's students receive free or reduced lunches (a number that has been dropping) compared with 25 percent at La Mesa, where 15 percent of the students are from families receiving aid for dependent children.

Both schools are ethnically and linguistically diverse, with the only significant difference being that La Mesa has a larger percentage of Latino/Chicano students and students who are considered Limited English Proficient (LEP). Although Hillview's community changes as families move in and out of the area, ethnic patterns appear to have remained stable since its opening. The current ethnic make-up is 53% white, 22% Latino/Chicano, 9% Asian, 7% African-American, 5% Filipino and 1% "Other." Eleven percent of the students are LEP. According to La Mesa's principal, the neighborhood surrounding the school is surprisingly stable and yet diverse: "We have some turnover, some transition, but interestingly enough our population stays pretty stable." La Mesa's current ethnic make-up is 52.2 percent White, 35.8 percent Latino, 4.4 percent Asian, 4.0 percent African-American, 1.5 percent Filipino, 1.3 percent Native American and 0.9 percent Pacific Islander. Nineteen percent of the students are LEP, the vast majority of whom have Spanish as their native language.

Classes at both Hillview and La Mesa revolve around a three track, year-round schedule, where two tracks are in session while one track is on a month-long break. School events are held twice so that all parents and classes have the opportunity to participate. To equalize enrollments across tracks, more than on-third of the teachers at both schools are assigned multi-grade classes: 15 at Hillview and 10 at La Mesa. Class sizes average 31.5 students at Hillview and 30.5 at La Mesa.

BUILDING BRIDGES TO PARENTS

Conditions that, according to contingency theory, produce bridging responses are present at both Hillview and La Mesa Schools: the schools are dependent on parents for crucial resources. Predictably, the schools and their teachers employ several strategies aimed at enhancing parent involvement.

Conditions that Foster Bridging

Both Hillview and La Mesa Schools are dependent on their students' families to provide two types of resources: material and social/cultural.

However, teachers' views of the availability of these resources differed somewhat between the schools, corresponding to differences in family affluence.

The two schools share a reliance on parents to provide material resources. Hillview's parents supply money through a Math-a-thon and sales. They also provide food for parties and family activities and classroom supplies on a limited basis. The same is true at La Mesa, where parents provide money to support assemblies, food for family-oriented activities, computers and playground equipment.

Both schools also rely heavily on parents for two less tangible, social resources. First, parents provide general support for education and the school. Hillview's teachers explained that parents can provide general reinforcement. One teacher noted, "Parents affect kids in the words that they say...whether they have a respect for education...for authority." Another added: "Attitude is a whole lot of it. Not only what [parents] say but what they do. Do they talk about the importance of education?" At Hillview, teachers and parents agreed that the school's predominantly middle-class community generally reinforces the importance of attaining a good education. However, teachers mentioned that many parents, including middle-class professionals, lack parenting skills.

La Mesa's teachers and parents also believed that it is important for parents to show a general interest in and support for their children's education. Teachers noted that it is crucial for parents to provide general support and care: "[They should] have an interest in their school," "Parents [should be] interested in what their children are doing," "[Parents should try] to give their child the attitude, the school attitude," "Parents [need to] model what is important." Speaking about their own involvement, parents added: "Whenever they need something...they know they can call me;" "I started to have a desire to get involved, to be there, to know the teachers, to know what's going on in school."

Both schools also rely on parents to help their children with schoolwork. Teachers at Hillview School reported that parents provide an important resource by working with their children at home: helping with homework and reading with their children. Parents reinforced this view, indicating that they help their children with homework assignments, check that homework is completed, ask about the day in school and assist their children with special school projects.

La Mesa's faculty also counts on parents to work at home with their children. The principal commented that parents most help their children when they "...work with them at home." Every teacher repeated the refrain: "follow the progress of their student, get involved in their homework schedule," "Make sure they're doing their homework," "They need to read to their children," "...talk to their children about school," "Take them places, museums..." Parents echoed this in explaining how they help their children: "We faithfully did their homework with them...read to them,"

"...we spend the day practicing ABCs...I'm teaching them the computer keypad...We go up to the library," "When I work with them it is on the flash cards and reading books." In spite of the obvious commitment demonstrated by these parents, teachers observed that recently parents seemed to be less involved in their children's education. A few commented, "There's always been difficulties, but this is a real down cycle," "The down-sweep has been really steep...and it's just about parents that [don't] take care of their kids." These teachers tended to attribute this to changes in the types of families residing in the surrounding community: "The school has changed, the environment...we're getting a lot more mobility in families, a lot more divorce kids," "I don't know if it's just new families, if it's because of all the unemployment," "There are many working parents that just don't spend time with their kids," "I have a lot more kids that qualify for free lunch."

Bridging Strategies

Hillview and La Mesa respond to their dependence on parents for material and social resources with similar bridging strategies, which include some school-wide programs but mainly involve the efforts of individual teachers (see Table 1). Both schools employ communicating, coopting, bargaining and coaching. Some of Hillview's teachers also use contracting, while La Mesa is involved in serving.

Communicating

Communicating with parents is the bridging strategy most commonly used by staffs of both schools. However, La Mesa's larger proportion of stu-

TABLE 1
Bridging: Conditions and Strategies at Hillview and La Mesa Schools

HILLVIEW SCHOOL		*LA MESA SCHOOL*	
Bridging Conditions	*Bridging Strategies*	*Bridging Conditions*	*Bridging Strategies*
Dependency for Material Resources	Communication- Cooptation (PTA)	Dependency for Material Resources	Communication Cooptation (PTA and Spirit Club) Serve
Dependency for General Support	Communication Bargaining	Dependency for General Support	Communicating Bargaining (limited)
Dependency for help with Schoolwork	Communicating- Contracting Coaching	Dependency for help with Schoolwork	Communication Coaching

dents from homes where English is not the dominant language presents special challenges.

At Hillview, school newsletters, calendars, personal letters, phone calls, and conferences are employed to express openness to parents. Through supportive, two-way communication between the school and home, the principal and teachers seek to develop a positive atmosphere in which adults are united in their belief that education is important. Hillview parents generally reported that they want to be a part of their children's education and to feel that school personnel are listening to what they say. As one parent replied, "Parents need to feel that they can talk to the principal and that their opinions matter." Both parents and teachers felt that it is important to work together, support one another, model proper behavior and consistently communicate with each other. One teacher remarked, "The biggest factor that I have seen in a child's success is that parent is working with the school and that parent follows through...communication is a two way street."

Most teachers at Hillview send newsletters home on a regular basis. Some newsletters are as simple as a single page relating the week's experiences, upcoming assignments and due dates. Other teachers use newsletters to ask for supplies or give parenting tips or information about community events. A second grade teacher writes what he calls "love notes," offering parenting tips and opportunities for parents to respond. Some upper grade teachers have students help in writing and designing newsletters.

A school-wide newsletter includes a note from the principal, a calendar of upcoming events, a letter from the PTA President, congratulatory messages and articles of interest written by staff and students. Parents often complain that they do not receive the information. Teachers explain that students often fail to deliver the newsletters. However, as one parent complained, "I get flyers after the event. They say they send them on time. I go through his backpack; that's not true...They send the flyers out the day after the event."

Teachers use phone messages when they need to relay specific information to a parent and are not sure that a hand-delivered message will reach home. Phone messages, though most teachers claim to use the phone for positive reasons, tend to be used for problems that require immediate attention and resolution: a behavior problem or a sudden drop in academic performance. Some teachers give their home phone numbers to parents as an invitation to call.

La Mesa and its various parent-oriented organizations also use newsletters, printed announcements and personal contact to keep parents apprized of school activities and programs and to encourage parents to support and participate in their children's schooling. The principal, teachers and parents agreed that maintaining open communications is a key to enhancing the educational experience of students. As the principal

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explains, "We speak that message frequently...I talk about this being an open school, accessible." Through their actions, teachers echo the importance of maintaining open communication channels, although in practice the information flow from teacher to parent is much heavier. Parents corroborate this view: "You're pretty much invited to get in touch with them any time," "Communication, I stress communication...since my kids started," "I want to be kept informed at all times of everything."

At the school level, the principal and PTA communicate regularly with parents through both informal and formal means. Parents and teachers noted that the principal regularly stood in the parking lot to greet parents both before and after school. He explained, "Ninety percent of the time I'm at the front of the school greeting parents...talking to parents...I pick up a lot of issues that way." Active parents also noted that they recruit parents and keep them informed about school activities through informal networks in the community: "I call [parents] and let them know this is what we have to do," "I invited other parents...to go with me to the PTA," "The incoming PTA president...I happened to see her in the grocery store...and she was welcoming and inviting and that's kind of how that got started."

The school and its PTA also employ more formal lines of communication to keep parents informed and to seek their involvement. The school periodically issues a newsletter that carries information about upcoming school events, including back-to-school night and open house. At the beginning of the academic year, the PTA sends a questionnaire to parents seeking their willingness to become involved as room mothers, volunteers and the like. The PTA also sends home bulletins inviting parents to participate in special events, such as family nights.

Teachers are the major source of communication with parents. They use a variety of strategies. Teachers, of course, meet with parents face-to-face. At back-to-school nights, teachers introduce parents to the year's curriculum and to their instructional expectations. In parent-teacher conferences, teachers offer feedback on student performance and suggest ways in which parents can assist their children. Teachers also talk to parents by telephone when a student encounters academic or behavioral difficulties or when a parent has not responded to invitations to meet in person.

Teachers also use a variety of written communications to maintain contact with parents to both keep parents apprized of their children's performance and engage their support and involvement. For example, the teacher of a four-five combination-grade class sends home a weekly "Friday Folder," which contains the student's work and a "behavior report." Another teacher compiles a 40 page handbook that explains her classroom policies, expectations and school rules. A kindergarten teacher sends a questionnaire to determine how parents are willing to be involved and their schedules. A fourth grade teacher sends home a letter in which she explains: "...my expectations...and...my philosophies...I'm opening the doors and we can start talking."

In spite of these efforts, La Mesa's faculty and PTA are concerned that two somewhat related factors inhibit their efforts to communicate with parents: social class and language. Some teachers attributed their sense that fewer families were involved in their children's education to an increase in the number of families facing economic difficulties. A few credited difficulties in communicating with and otherwise relating to parents to the same factor: "I find that sometimes in a lower socioeconomic household, more parents tend to be more intimidated by education or the people that are involved in education...," "Then there's the other end of the spectrum where we're almost viewed as a child care environment...or parents aren't around." One parent's comments reinforced the difficulties that economic hardships can pose: "Maybe I need a car; I need a ride [to school]. There are a lot of parents that don't have transportation, and they're very low income families and, like myself, single parents."

Language was mentioned even more frequently as a barrier to communication. As noted earlier, a large proportion of La Mesa's students are Latino and, of those, many are not proficient in English. Teachers viewed this as a substantial barrier: "At times because of the language barrier, they don't maybe understand what we're asking." Parents who are active in the PTA and have attempted to encourage Latino parents to become involved elaborated this point: "It's giving me a really hard time because of the language barrier," "I think the Hispanic might be a little more intimidated if they can't speak English."

A Latino mother advanced an explanation for the absence of Latinos at school: "You don't see them [at school]. Why, because they feel foolish, because the feel they don't belong...because they feel they're outsiders." A non-Latino mother seemed to corroborate this when she commented on the PTA board's reluctance to embrace the Latino community: "I just thought of the board that we had and I just thought, I don't see them as willing to do that."

More recently, the school has worked to make La Mesa School more inviting to Latino and Spanish speaking parents. Written communications from the school are now printed in both Spanish and English. Individual teachers are cognizant of the need to translate their written communications into Spanish: "I'm working on getting [the class handbook] translated into Spanish." The school's bilingual aides are available to translate for teachers when they meet with Spanish speaking parents. In an effort to attract more Latino parents to PTA functions, a Spirit Committee was organized to appeal to that segment of the community. The Spirit Committee's Chair is a Latino mother. The Bilingual Advisory Committee, which is required for the school to receive categorical aid, has been formed and has made special efforts to encourage Spanish-speaking parents to join. And, as several teachers and the principal, himself, pointed out, the principal is bilingual and addresses Spanish-speaking parents in Spanish.

In spite of these efforts, the problem remains. Few Latino families join school activities. The Spirit Committee has developed into a Latino alternative to the PTA. The Chair of the Bilingual Advisory Committee is a Caucasian father of a student who is hearing impaired. He explained his qualifications: "Sign language, that makes me bilingual." And, a Latino mother who is active at La Mesa commented on the principal's bilingual ability: "It sounds funny when I hear [him], but he tries to. At least it shows that he tries...Parents really would like to...tell him who [they are] and to talk to him."

According to a Latino parent, the problem does not lie solely with the school. She explained that parents often have other priorities: "the laundry...cooking...it's my soap opera." She also noted that it can be difficult to communicate with families because, "They don't have a phone and some of them change their phone." She did observe that, in spite of the present difficulties, many Spanish-speaking parents would attend an English class if La Mesa would offer one. However, she explained, "I have not mentioned because [the school staff] don't have the time. That's the thing, they don't have the time."

Coopting

Cooptation is another method that Hillview and La Mesa Schools use to bridge to parents. It involves gaining the commitment of parents by involving them in the school organization. The staffs of both schools invite parents to become "part of" the school, identify with the school and thereby become its defenders. By being participants, parents can feel that they are a part of the process, take an "insider's view," evolve into "cheerleaders" for the staff and school program and develop a sense that the school, in the words of La Mesa's principal, is "open" and "accessible".

Both Hillside and La Mesa use similar programs–student performances, skate nights, family nights, picnics, field trips and multi-cultural events—to invite parents to the campus to view and take part in their children's activities.

The schools also employ more involved forms of cooptation. Both Hillview and La Mesa recruit parents to serve as classroom volunteers. And, many parents respond. Several teachers at both schools noted that parents are more likely to volunteer while their children are in the primary grades. This is corroborated by teacher reports of multiple volunteers in grades K-3, with the largest numbers by far in kindergarten, and far fewer if any in grades 4-6. Teachers employ parent volunteers in a variety of roles: reading to students, tutoring individual students, preparing instructional materials, filing papers and materials, preparing bulletin boards, planning class parties and contacting parents. One Hillview parent commented: "I am a volunteer...I think you have to give back." Another indicated, "My husband and I are born-again Christians. Volunteerism is very important."It encourages parents to get involved in the Parent/Teacher Association (PTA).

Another form of cooptation involves recruiting parents to join the Parent Teacher Organization and to participate on the School Site Council, the School Improvement Committee and the Bilingual Advisory Committee, which are required to obtain categorical funds. At Hillview, these activities are intended to send the message that parents are important.

The story of La Mesa's PTA reveals an important dynamic in the school's effort to bridge to parents. The PTA, by all accounts, has grown increasingly active in the past three years, staging special events, family nights and raising funds to purchase computers and playground equipment. Parents are also recruited to serve on the School Site Council and the Bilingual Advisory Committee, which are either necessary to receive categorical funds or highly encouraged by the district office.

Parents who are active in La Mesa School generally share the view that the school is, indeed, open and accessible. Parents who are less engaged, however, expressed mixed feelings. On the one hand, they appreciate the special events sponsored by the PTA. On the other, they feel that some individual teachers do not invite parent participation. We address this in the later section on buffering strategies. Finally, as reported above, the Latino community, in general, and Spanish speaking parents, specifically, do not find La Mesa to be inviting. Apart from the Spirit Committee of the PTA, which has evolved into a Latino alternative to the PTA, Latino parents are seldom seen on campus.

Bargaining

Under certain circumstances, school personnel and parents can find themselves in conflicts where agreement can only be reached by bargaining. Bargaining between teachers and parents often requires the presence of an administrator to "negotiate" a truce, which allows both parties to reestablish a working relationship. Bargaining allows both parties to state their interpretation of the incident and reach an agreement. Both Hillview and La Mesa engage in bargaining with parents, although it is a more prevalent practice at the more affluent Hillview.

Hillview's teachers agreed that they feel comfortable including the principal in discussions with parents who are unhappy with their child's situation. Parents agreed that it is the principal's responsibility to insure that parents and teachers work together. As one parent said, it is the principal's job to be available for parents and teachers: "Parents here are rude and demanding. They are stressed to the max, married to high priced jobs." This stress can be volatile when parents feel that they or their child's rights have been violated. One angry and moderately active parent expressed this feeling: "They don't like it because I am going to fight for my child and the teacher is going to lose."

As we will describe in the section on buffering, at La Mesa School parents rarely question the practices or decisions of teachers. However, when such situations arise, teachers meet with parents to resolve the problem or misunderstanding. Teachers agreed that their principal is particularly adept at mediating between themselves and disgruntled parents. The comment of a special education teacher summarizes: "I would rely on my administrator a lot to kind of ease over any tensions that a parent might be exhibiting or any stresses that they have or concerns that they have." The principal concurred: "It is my job. It is my task to counsel with that parent."

Some Hillview teachers engage in a different form of bargaining to gain the support and involvement of parents. These teachers use a token economy in their classes, in which individual students or study groups are given points for various behaviors and accomplishments. At the end of each week students exchange points for prizes. Some teachers credit a student when he/she returns a homework sheet or a note to a parent and with the parent's signature. A teacher explained, "I get the buy-in from the child, and they get their parent involved." A teacher, who previously had worked in special education, where such practices apparently are more common, began the practice. Over time, she has shared this strategy with colleagues.

Coaching

The final strategy that the schools and teachers use to extend a bridge to parents is training, or coaching. Both schools offer training to parents. One teacher at each site conducts training in "Megaskills," a program in parenting skills. The schools distribute flyers to parents, inviting their participation. To date, a small number of parents have completed the training. At both schools, individual teachers also train parents on an informal basis. For example, one of Hillside's teachers invites individual parents to join her and their child in after school sessions where the teacher shows the parent how to with homework.

Contracting

Contracting is a formal agreement between two parties regarding the conditions under which some exchange of goods or services will be conducted. This practice is employed only at Hillview where teachers enter into contracts with parents in which parents agree to reinforce the classroom program in specific ways. Like bargaining, the practice of individual teachers' contracting with parents was initiated by an ex-special education teacher, who shared the practice with other teachers. Parents contract with the school and teachers in other ways as well: when they agree to Individualized Education Plans, which are required for special education students; when they sign homework assignment sheets, progress reports and tests; when they agree to school codes of conduct; or when they agree to formally written discipline plans prescribed by the Student Study Team.

Serving

La Mesa school offers a final bridge. The school operates a "Clothes Closet" which provides clothing from a recycling program to families in need. It also operates a "School Store" where students redeem coupons earned for good behavior for school supplies that their families could not otherwise afford. Both of these programs serve the needs of families who have difficulty providing their children with basic necessities. It represents an interesting manifestation of bridging, which typically occurs when organization depend on the environment for resources, because here the school organization furnishes resources to families, enabling those families to provide their children with resources to support their education.

BUFFERING BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND PARENTS

Contingency theory informs us that buffering is the second strategy that organizations use to manage relations with the external environment. Both Hillview and La Mesa Schools confront similar conditions to which buffering theoretically is an appropriate response, although to differing degrees due to the larger proportion of middle and upper-middle income families at Hillview and the larger proportion of families for whom Spanish is the dominant language at La Mesa. Predictably, both schools employ parallel buffering strategies, differing in degree of use that roughly corresponds with differences in family characteristics.

Conditions that Foster Buffering

Parents and families present Hillview and La Mesa Schools with conditions of uncertainty that are associated with the use of buffering strategies. Those conditions are heterogeneity, instability and threat. While both schools confront similar environmental conditions, they do so in somewhat different ways and to varying degrees.

Heterogeneity

Heterogeneity in the environment can introduce uncertainty by requiring organizations to have different technologies to process a variety of inputs. As we noted in describing the two schools, both serve students from many, different ethnic backgrounds: African-American, Asian-American, Latino/Chicano, Filipino, South Asian and White. Here, an important difference is that La Mesa has a substantially higher and growing percentage of Latino/Chicano students. Similarly, many students in both schools live in homes where the dominant language is not English. The percentage is higher at La Mesa, and there Spanish is the language spoken by almost all students who are not proficient in English. At Hillview, while Spanish is the dominant language in most non-English speaking homes, other languages include Tagalog, French and Vietnamese.

Families of students at both Hillview and La Mesa also vary along socioeconomic lines, although the differences are less dramatic at La Mesa. Hillview's families range from upper middle-class to below the poverty level, with the majority falling in the middle. The principal, teachers and parents at La Mesa agreed that their students come from families whose socioeconomic status varies from middle-class to "struggling quite a bit." The principal noted that one parent is an attorney, a few are teachers but "a larger proportion are blue collar workers. Some folks who are receiving public assistance...very few people living in automobiles."

Instability

From the contingency perspective, unstable environments also introduce uncertainty because they make processing inputs unpredictable. Again, both schools face this source of environmental uncertainty, but to differing degrees. Hillview's principal and teachers noted that some of the school's families lack stability. Some families are transient. While staff members reported that this is particularly true of families residing in the low-income apartments on the periphery of the school's attendance zone, instability has crept into the more affluent subdivisions as an economic recession has caused many families to lose their homes. Teachers also noted that some families are undergoing stresses resulting from domestic difficulties, including divorce.

At La Mesa, in spite of the principal's statement that the surrounding community is stable, there are indications of instability. A few teachers indicated that some lower income families were transient. They also observed that instability occurs in working-class, residential areas as the recession causes families to relocate. In addition, the rise in the proportion of Latino students at La Mesa reveals some movement of families both into and out of the attendance area.

Threat

Threat from external sources presents organizations with uncertainty that can compromise the way in which work gets carried out. While both schools reported that parents could pose threats, it is a much more serious issue at Hillview.

La Mesa's principal and a few teachers noted that a small number of parents posed one of two types of threat. First, there were parents who questioned decisions made by the principal or a teacher. For example, the principal and some teachers explained that a few parents have insisted that their children be placed in certain teachers' classes. Second, the presence of some parents can disrupt the classroom environment. One teacher reported that a parent volunteer disrupted instruction by loudly directing her own child's behavior. Other teachers complained about parents who would arrive unannounced to observe. However, La Mesa's teachers asserted that parental intrusion and threat were rare. For instance, a teacher with 29 years of experience at La Mesa commented: "We have very few parents that cause problems at this school. I've only had a few all the years I've been teaching." Other teachers explained that such problems occur less frequently at La Mesa than at other schools in the district.

Such incidents were indeed more common at Hillview. There, teachers reported that a minority of parents poses a threat by questioning their authority, judgment and knowledge. Teachers reported having parents question their discipline practices. One recalled that a parent did not approve of her child being kept in the classroom during recess because he had not completed an assignment. The parent protested to the teacher and instructed her son that he did not have to comply. Several teachers attributed this type of difficulty to the failure of parents to allow their children to be responsible individuals. One teacher commented: "We have parents who haven't separated from the child."

Occasionally, Hillview parents question teachers' instructional practices and decisions. A kindergarten teacher reported that a parent had complained that the teacher did not assign enough ditto sheets. In another instance, a parent indicated that she had complained to her son's teacher because he had not been placed in the district's program for gifted students. Although the teacher had informed the parent that the district's program did not include primary students, the parent persisted. While these incidents may seem relatively undramatic, they represent an important threat to teachers. Hillview teachers, to a person, reported that they need and expect parents to support them and the school. One observed: "I think parents should give examples of schools importance and show how important school is and that teachers are to be respected. It's very important [for parents] to show kids, 'I support this teacher.'" Another teacher emphasized: "[Parents] should be doing their job at home. Let us do our job at school. We are trained professionally to do our job."

Buffering Strategies

In responding to two of types of uncertainty that some families present—heterogeneity and threat—Hillview and La Mesa Schools buffer parental influence in two general ways: coding inputs and blocking access. While the two schools employ similar buffering strategies, specific approaches vary in type and intensity, corresponding to differences in the socio-economic and ethno-linguistic backgrounds of families (see Table 2). There is little evidence that either school has systematically developed or

TABLE 2
Buffering: Conditions and Strategies at Hillview and La Mesa Schools

HILLVIEW SCHOOL		*LA MESA SCHOOL*	
Buffering Conditions	***Buffering Strategies***	***Buffering Conditions***	***Buffering Strategies***
Heterogeneity (ethno-linguistic; social class differences are relatively large)	Coding (heterogeneous grouping)	Heterogeneity (large and growing Spanish speaking population; social class)	Coding (heterogeneous grouping; cross-track differences
Instability		Instability	
Threat	Limit Access	Threat (rare)	Limit Access (rarely used)

implemented strategies for coping with the instability of some of their students' families.

Coding Inputs

One way that organizations buffer their core technologies from the uncertainties of the environment is by coding inputs. This is particularly useful when the environment is heterogeneous. Coding involves classifying inputs so that the technical core can manage them more efficiently.

At both schools, teachers employ a form of coding to manage diversity in students' general academic ability and language ability. To manage classrooms with students of widely varying academic abilities, teachers place students in heterogeneous work groups, making sure that at least one high achieving student is present in each group. According to a Hillview teacher of a 1-2 combination, "They help each other." She explained that she "reminds the higher level kids to read with the lower level kids, point to words." A teacher at La Mesa similarly noted: "I have them in groups of 4 with...a high achiever in each group and one of my 8 lowest kids. I have 8 groups. Each group is responsible to help everybody in their group achieve success." Some teachers, particularly at La Mesa School, indicated that student ability is linked to parent involvement, which, in turn, is associated to some degree with parent social status. Thus, when teachers group students on the basis of ability, they are, in effect, coding them by level of parent involvement and thus social status.

Teachers at both schools also use heterogeneous grouping to manage language diversity. Several teachers at Hillview indicated that they pair students who speak only Spanish with a student who speaks both Spanish and English. A sixth grade teacher explained: "Groups get points, which they cash-in at the end of week. Translators get points." La Mesa's teachers also reported that they pair students who speak only Spanish with a student who speaks both Spanish and English. Other teachers match Spanish-speaking students with English speaking students. As a first grade teacher explained: "I have...English speaking with non-English speaking to totally immerse them in English."

A few teachers at La Mesa School also noted that an unintended consequence of a multi-track, year round schedule is that the tracks tend to vary both by general academic ability and language ability. They explained it in the following way: Parents who are more involved in their children's education tend to be the first to select a track, usually choosing the track that most resembles the traditional schedule. Thus, to the extent that parent involvement and student achievement are associated, better students tend to congregate in a certain track. The multi-track year round schedule has also inadvertently led to the unintended separation of students by ethnolinguistic background. As a teacher of a 4-5 combination-class noted: "Track B tends to have more Hispanic students on it because their break happens to be during Christmas, and they go to Mexico." Thus, of the three year-round tracks at La Mesa School, one has the majority of Latino and Spanish-speaking students, allowing the school to concentrate its bilingual programs and aides on that track but in effect segregating these students from the rest of the student body.

Limiting access

Teachers at both Hillview and La Mesa responded to parental threat by limiting access to themselves and to their classrooms. On occasion they called upon the principal for support.

When parents question their instructional practices or decisions, teachers reported that they generally respond by discussing the matter with the parent. This, the teachers indicated, handles most potential problems. On those rare occasions when things come to a head between themselves and a parent, teachers call on their principal for support. Teachers at both schools interestingly used the identical term to characterize their respective principal: "supportive." Teachers noted that when a parent approaches the principal without having contacted his/her child's teacher, the principal refers the parent to the teacher. However, if the teacher and parent cannot resolve the problem, then the principal will meet with all of the involved parties to seek a resolution. A Hillview teacher explained, "If it gets more than I can handle, I call in the principal. There has to be a kind of...go between." The principal at La Mesa, himself, elaborated: "My job is...to the greatest extent possible [to] make sure you have peaceful classrooms. If [parents] are accusatory and if they're disruptive...they're disturbing the learning process."

A few teachers at both schools indicated that parents who volunteer in their classrooms occasionally question the teacher's instructional practices. A kindergarten teacher at Hillview characterized these parents as: "'lookie lous' who don't come in to help but to critique." A kindergarten teacher at La Mesa explained that on one occasion she had several parent volunteers in the classroom at one time who used the occasion to socialize. A La Mesa teacher of a 3-4 combination described a parent volunteer: "...who was very loud. So when she came into the classroom, she would yell across the room at students." When such problems arise, teachers simply discuss them with the parent. In the few cases where the problems become chronic, teachers ask the parents not to volunteer. A parent who reported that her child's teacher had stopped asking her to volunteer corroborated this.

Generally, then, the principals and teachers at both Hillview and La Mesa Schools express a desire to maintain an open and accessible school. They encourage parents to become involved in their children's education by inviting them to participate in parent organizations, volunteer in classrooms and even visit classrooms. Only when parents disrupt the instructional environment, does the school block access.

All parents do not share this view. Some Hillview parents reported that they believe that the school closes ranks against parents. One parent recounted an incident that involved her son having been in a fight on school grounds. When she defended her child's actions during a meeting with the principal and teacher, "the principal backed the teacher and that made me angry." Another parent, who is active in the PTA, recounted the aftermath of an intense conflict between a parent and teacher: "Teachers were really intimidated, stand-offish. It took a long time to win back the teachers' trust. During that time no parent was allowed anywhere. You had to check into the office and were asked 'What do you want?'" At La Mesa, while most parents found the school to be relatively inviting, one parent, in particular, voiced misgivings about the sincerity teachers' invitations. She explained that she had expressed a desire to volunteer and to observe her child in class. The response, according to her, was less than inviting: "I said I can help you...but [the teacher] has never done it. They don't feel comfortable: I don't know if it is because they are not getting things done." She added, "It doesn't seem like they really want you to go and just observe. They don't feel comfortable with that."

DISCUSSION

Our general purpose in conducting this study was to explore the application of the organizational perspective offered by contingency theory to examining school-family relations. On a general level, our findings suggest that contingency theory provides a heuristic which illuminates two general patterns: Schools are dependent on families for resources necessary for the instruction of students and, thus, employ bridging strategies to gain access to those resources. Moreover, parents and certain family conditions present schools with uncertainties that can negatively affect classroom instruction and, thus, schools utilize buffering strategies to minimize the potentially disruptive impact of parents and families.

However, at a deeper level our findings reveal that conventional treatments of contingency theory offer a limited view of school-family relations. Contingency theory, like much of organization theory, is derived from observations not of schools but of private sector, for-profit organizations (Allison, 1983). Such organizations tend to employ technologies that are based on relatively well-understood processes for transforming material resources, such as metals and plastics, into products, such as automobiles. Our findings reveal that, while schools rely on parents for some material resources, they chiefly depend on parents for non-material resources: general support for the school, its teachers and programs; helping their children at home with school work.

Such resources are social and cultural in nature. They build on social relations established between parents, their children and members of the school staff to reinforce the normative order, including authority relations, of schools. This difference in the type of resource required by school organizations has important consequences for at least three aspects of managing school-family relations revealed by this study's findings: the particular forms that bridging and buffering take, the importance of the ethno-linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds of families, and the centrality of teachers in managing school-family relations.

BRIDGING AND BUFFERING SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

While Hillview and La Mesa Elementary Schools generally bridge and buffer their relations with families, both schools use specific strategies that are not noted in conventional treatments of contingency theory.

Bridging

Because the material resources that fuel production organizations are generally available in the marketplace from a variety of vendors, contingency theory emphasizes bridging strategies aimed at reducing dependency: bargaining, co-opting and contracting. Both Hillview and La Mesa Schools employ bargaining and co-opting and Hillview uses contracting on a limited basis. However, the main bridging strategy that both schools employ is "communicating". In addition, both schools use "coaching", and La Mesa adds "serving". Reliance on these additional strategies may be attributable to the non-material, socio-cultural resources that schools depend on parents to provide.

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While production organizations can select from a variety of vendors for material resources, schools must rely on parents, or other family members, to provide support, parenting and help with schoolwork. There are few options. Thus, strategies that may be effective in the marketplace are unsuitable here. Rather than utilize strategies that reduce dependency, schools bridge to build collaborative relations that enhance the flow of resources from their sole source. Thus, schools rely on the social strategy of communicating to gain the social and normative support of parents. In addition, both of the schools in this study recognize that some families may not possess the resources on which schools rely. Thus, they offer parenting classes, teachers coach parents on how to do homework with their children, and one school makes provisions to supply low income families with clothing and school supplies.

Buffering

According to contingency theory, buffering reduces the potential impact of uncertainties regarding the quality and availability of material resources. Uneven quality or flow of resources can compromise the effectiveness and efficiency of production organizations. Thus, organizations stockpile inventories, level outputs and code inputs. Of these strategies, Hillview and La Mesa Schools employ only coding, which takes a form quite unlike anything described in the contingency literature. To this, both schools add limiting access. These departures from contingency theory can also be traced to the reliance of schools on parents to maintain the social order of the school and to provide cultural resources for their children.

Limiting Access

Teachers limit access to parents who question their professional authority and skills or disrupt instructional activities by their presence in the classroom. Teachers at Hillview and La Mesa Schools viewed these parents as challenging the general order of the school to pursue the interests of their child by questioning disciplinary practices or instructional techniques or by disrupting a classroom in order to provide direction to their children. Faced with such disruptive influences, teachers, with the support of their principals when necessary, close ranks.

Coding

To manage students' diverse academic abilities and ethno-linguistic backgrounds, teachers and schools employ two forms of coding. First, teachers mix students of different academic or language abilities and rely on more capable students to aid their less capable peers.

Second, schools unintentionally cluster students from two types of family backgrounds—those that are heavily involved at school and those from Latino and Spanish-speaking backgrounds—on separate year-round tracks. Parents who actively engage schools tend to be the first to select tracks for their children. Generally, these parents pick the track that most resembles the traditional, school calendar, with its long mid-summer break. As a result, the children of highly involved parents, who tend to be more affluent, share the same track. Similarly, many of La Mesa's Latino parents place their children in the track that provides a major break during the winter holidays, allowing them to visit relatives in Mexico for Christmas. This results in a track that includes almost all of La Mesa's Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students.

Both types of coding, one intentional and the other unintentional, produce virtually the same end: Students are clustered according to family background. In spite of its label, the heterogeneous grouping of students separates children by general academic or language ability, despite mixing in students with more ability who serve as "tutors." This type of grouping works to separate students according to family characteristics, because academic ability is associated with social class and language ability is linked to ethnicity. Similarly, multi-track schedules provide a structure within students are separated, albeit by parental choice, according to social class and ethno-linguistic background. In both instances, teachers explained that such grouping enhanced instruction: the former by providing instructional assistance to students with less ability and the latter by enabling schools to concentrate resources for teaching students with Limited English Proficiency.

While a close examination of these "tracking" practices lies beyond the scope of the present study, these findings point to the need for additional research. For, the existence of even inadvertent segregation of students according to family background begs the question: Are there differences in the curriculum content and instructional practices between tracks that compromise the educational opportunities afforded to students from less affluent and ethno-linguistic minority backgrounds? In the next section, we examine more closely the impact of social class and ethno-linguistic background on school-family relations.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND ETHNO-LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND

The impact that the dependence of schools on parents for social and cultural resources has on their bridging and buffering strategies is revealed by differences in the ways that Hillview and La Mesa Schools relate to parents. These differences appear to be associated with differences in the social and cultural resources of parents at the two schools and the degree to which parents' resources fit the social and cultural order of the schools.

A critical social and cultural resource is language. A greater percentage of La Mesa's families are Latino, and Spanish is the language spoken in many of their homes. This limits communication, the dominant bridging strategy, between La Mesa and many families. Consequently, the participation of Latino parents in schools activities remains sparse. Even the Chair of the Bilingual Advisory Committee is an Anglo parent. The only exception is the Spirit Committee, which is chaired by a Latino mother and has evolved into a Latino alternative to the PTA. However, the school has not been able to capitalize on this to engage Latino parents in other groups or events. It is not a case of Spanish speaking parents not possessing the cultural resource of language: They speak Spanish. Nor is it a matter of the school not making an effort: The school employs bilingual aides and prints newsletters in both English and Spanish. Rather, it seems that parents' resources do not fit the socio-cultural order of the school and vice-versa. As a result, many of the strategies that the school employs, including having the principal attempt to speak Spanish to parents, either prove to be embarrassing to the intended audience or are simply ineffective.

The importance of matching parents' resources with the school's normative order is reflected in another difference between schools. Several teachers at Hillview School enter into written contracts with parents, while none of La Mesa's teachers use this strategy. Through contracts, teachers gain the agreement of parents to reinforce the classroom program in specific ways. The absence of teacher-parent contracts at La Mesa is predictable. Most teachers cannot speak or write Spanish; many parents cannot speak or read English. Thus, written contracts between teachers and many parents would be of little use, reflecting the importance of the congruence of parent resources and school norms.

In a telling reversal, the existence of a program at La Mesa School and not at Hillview underscores how the congruence of resources and norms can affect bridging. Responding to the large number of low-income families that La Mesa serves, the staff distributes recycled clothing to families in need and operates a "School Store" where low-income students exchange coupons for school supplies. Because most children who attend Hillview come from middle-income families, there is little need for this type of program. Here, La Mesa provides material resources that many of its families need, providing an effective bridge.

Differences in families' social and cultural resources are also associated with differences in the use of limiting access as a buffering strategy. Hillview's teachers more frequently indicated that parents question their authority, instructional practices and decisions. Teachers, including some at La Mesa, attributed this to the presence of more middle and upper-middle class families at Hillview. They noted that wealthier parents are more likely than parents from poor or working class backgrounds to pressure teachers, suggesting that parents with more social and normative resources that are relevant in the school context are more likely to challenge teachers.

Thus, the two case studies reveal that schools and parents are involved in a balancing act associated with bridging and buffering. The schools chiefly rely on parents for social and cultural resources, which raises two related difficulties. First, parents who bear the socio-cultural resources on which schools depend, for that very reason, are both more likely to be reached by schools' bridging strategies and,more likely to question the authority of professional and thus be more likely to be buffered by schools. Second, parents who, largely for reasons linked to social class or ethno-linguistic background, possess socio-cultural resources not aligned to the cultural order of schools are the most difficult to reach through the use of conventional bridging strategies. This is consistent with the findings of previous research that schools' predominantly middle-class and Eurocentric culture contributes to their distancing parents from low-income and minority backgrounds (Henry, 1996; Litwak, Meyer & Mickelson, 1974). It also reinforces Smrekar's (1996) contention that low-income and minority parents lack sufficient cultural capital to engage successfully with schools.

TEACHERS: THE CHIEF AGENTS OF BUFFERING AND BRIDGING

The findings of the present study also depart from contingency theory regarding which organizational actors are involved in bridging and buffering. Contingency theory explains that top-level managers are largely responsible for enacting strategies to manage relations with organizations' external environments, leaving people involved in production to focus on the work at hand. Both Hillview and La Mesa Schools do provide schoolwide programs—such as family nights, back-to-school nights, school newsletters and parenting classes—that bridge relations with parents and their principals attempt to buffer teachers from intrusive parents. However, individual teachers, who work at their schools' technical cores, are largely responsible for maintaining positive working relations with parents. Teachers meet with parents, write to them and speak to them by telephone. They inform parents about their children's assignments, share information about their children's academic progress and suggest how parents can assist their children with homework. Teachers also buffer classroom instruction from parental intrusion by bargaining and occasionally excluding.

Managers of production organizations can centrally coordinate relations with a limited number of suppliers and clients, who, for the most part, are other organizations. However, to access the social and cultural resources provided by families, schools must manage relations with the families of each of their students, an impossibility for administrators given the hundreds, an in some cases thousands, of families that must be engaged. Thus, teachers are best positioned to monitor and facilitate parental involvement, gaining support for the normative order of their classrooms and obtaining the social and cultural resources that each child needs to achieve academic success. This reinforces the importance of research that emphasizes the knowledge and practice of individual teachers in fostering school-family relations (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Epstein & Becker, 1982). It also squares with the findings of recent research, which suggests that the key to improving schools lies not in simply restructuring school organization but in establishing structures that enhance the capacity of teachers to improve their knowledge and practice (Elmore, Peterson & McCarthey, 1996).

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CHAPTER 5

TEACHERS' WORK AND INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT, PART I

Alternative Views of the Task of Teaching[1]

Brian Rowan

Using the theoretical ideas of Charles Perrow (1967), this paper develops a conceptual framework for analyzing the nature of teachers' instructional work and tests some hypotheses about the circumstances under which the nature of teachers' work varies within and across schools. The conceptual framework developed here focuses on variation in two main dimensions of teachers' instructional work: task variety and task uncertainty. Data gathered from a survey of high school teachers shows that teachers' levels of experience and education affect the amount of task variety and task uncertainty faced by teachers, as do their subject area specializations, and their beliefs about the nature of learning and teaching. The implications of these findings for research on school organization and management are considered.

In the 1990's, a diverse group of researchers, policy makers, and practitioners tried to move educational practice in two directions. One direction involved the development of new forms of instructional practice grounded in socio-cognitive and constructivist perspectives on learning and teaching, a direction—that if pursued in schools—would make classroom teaching more complex and less routine (for a review, see Rowan, 1995). Interestingly, the call for new forms of instruction came to be associated with a second reform idea in education, one that called for a restructuring of schools toward what Rowan (1990b) called "organic" forms of management, especially approaches to instructional management characterized by supportive forms of leadership, participative forms of instructional decision making, and higher levels of staff collaboration. In the literature on school restructuring, this pattern of instructional management is often seen as highly suited to managing the complex forms of teaching called for by instructional reformers, especially since organic management is expected to capitalize on the commitment and expertise of a professionalized teaching force (for reviews, see Rowan, 1990a; 1990b).

In a series of studies conducted in the 1990s, my colleagues and I sought to ground these reform arguments in a theoretical perspective on organizations known as contingency theory. Using data collected by researchers at the Center for Research on the Context of Teaching (CRC), we set out to address two conceptual challenges associated with using contingency theory to understand instructional management in schools. Our initial efforts examined whether newer forms of instructional practices (grounded in constructivist theories of learning and teaching) were making teachers' work more complex and non-routine, as contingency would suggest. In a series of studies, we found empirical support for this hypothesis and showed how a variety of instructional practices consistent with reform ideas about learning and teaching led teachers to report increased complexity and uncertainty in their work (Rowan, Raudenbush, and Cheong, 1993; Rowan, 1999).

The next step in our research agenda involved testing another hypothesis from contingency theory—the idea that a shift toward more complex forms of teaching would be associated with organic patterns of instructional management in schools. Building on earlier attempts to measure "organic" patterns of management in schools, my colleagues and I used CRC data to demonstrate that teachers who viewed their work as complex and non-routine also reported higher levels of organic management in their schools (Rowan, Raudenbush, and Kang, 1991; Rowan, Raudenbush, and Cheong, 1993; Rowan, 1999). In these same studies, we also found that teachers working in school environments characterized by organic management also reported greater commitment to work, higher expectations for success in teaching, and more professional growth. Thus, the results of these studies were consistent with the general viewpoint of contingency theory and suggested that organic forms of management could improve teacher productivity by increasing teachers' commitment and expertise.

THE PROBLEM

This paper and one that follows are designed as extensions of the work just discussed. The papers address two conceptual and empirical shortcomings in the work just cited. One problem concerns the key measure of "complex" and "non-routine" work that was used in these studies. The measures my colleagues and I used previously were drawn from an older literature that did not correspond well with newer conceptual models found in organization theory. As a result, one goal of the current paper is to introduce a more sophisticated conceptual and measurement framework for assessing the nature of teachers' work. A second problem with the studies discussed above was their tendency to view the relationship between the task of teaching and patterns of instructional management in schools as a simple, non-recursive relationship. In earlier work, for example, my colleagues and I simply assumed that as teachers' work became more complex and non-routine, patterns of instructional management in schools shifted to being more "organic" in form (Rowan, Raudenbush, and Kang, 1991; Rowan, Raudenbush, and Cheong, 1992; Rowan, 1999). In the work presented here, by contrast, a more complex theoretical model is developed. The work I will present in the paper that follows this one will argue that the nature of teachers' work and patterns of instructional management are reciprocally related. Such a model, I will argue, more faithfully represents the logic of contingency theory and therefore shows more clearly how the presence of organic management in schools increases teachers' commitment and expertise.

These extensions to previous work are presented in a series of two closely intertwined papers (of which this is the first). In the present paper, the goal is to develop a conceptual framework on the nature of teachers' work and to use this perspective to show how four common, but strikingly inconsistent, views about the nature of teachers' work can be reconciled. At the heart of the analysis is the assumption that teachers' work—and the extent to which it becomes complex and non-routine—is affected by the circumstances of teaching. In particular, this paper demonstrates that teachers working in different academic disciplines come to hold very different views of teaching and learning, and it shows how these differing views of teaching and learning affect the amount of task variety and task uncertainty that teachers perceive in their working environments. In particular, in this paper I argue that teachers who endorse beliefs about teaching and learning that are consistent with socio-cognitive and constructivist theories are more likely than others to view their work as complex and uncertain, thus demonstrating the validity of a central tenet of most theories of school restructuring—that new forms of instructional practice change the very nature of teachers' work, making it both more complex and more uncertain.

The paper that follows this one turns to the problem of how teachers' changing conceptions of instructional work are related to presence or absence of organic forms of instructional management. Following contingency theory, I hypothesize in that paper that teachers who adopt a "constructivist" view of teaching experience more task variety in their work, forcing them to deviate from standardized operating procedures. As this occurs, teachers also experience more task uncertainty. However, the amount of task uncertainty that teachers experience is argued in the next paper to depend on the extent to which teachers work in environments characterized by organic management. Where organic patterns of instructional management are present, I hypothesize that task uncertainty will be reduced, thus changing the nature of teaching from what would otherwise be a "non-routine" form of teaching to one that I argue can be labeled as an "expert" form of teaching.

ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF TEACHERS' WORK IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

I begin with a discussion of the nature of teachers' instructional work, a discussion that is grounded in a theoretical framework originally developed by Charles Perrow (1967) in a pioneering contribution to the development of contingency theory. As we shall see, Perrow developed a model of organizational tasks that describes two important dimensions of work in any organization—task variety and task uncertainty. As applied to the work of teaching, I argue that *task variety* refers to the range of instructional activities that teachers engage in as they teach in classrooms, and that *task uncertainty* refers to the extent to which teachers have access to a systematic body of knowledge to guide this work. Table 1 shows how Perrow's (1967) conceptual framework can be used to define four ideal types of tasks, ranging from routine tasks (characterized by low levels of task variety and task uncertainty) to non-routine tasks (characterized by high levels of task variety and task uncertainty).[2] In the following paragraphs, I describe how each of the cells in Table 1 corresponds to a distinctive body of writing about the nature of teachers' instructional work.

TABLE 1
Conceptual Framework Describing Types of Teaching Tasks

		Task Variety	
		Low	*High*
Task Uncertainty	*Low*	Routine	Expert
	High	Amateur	Non-routine

Teaching as a Non-Routine Task

One well-known perspective on the nature of teachers' work emerged in the late 1960's and gained widespread attention in various sociological analyses of schools as "loosely coupled" organizations (e.g., Bidwell, 1965; Lortie, 1975; Weick, 1976; Meyer and Rowan, 1978). As Table 1 shows, this view holds that teaching is a non-routine task—characterized by high levels of task variety *and* high levels of task uncertainty. Lying at the heart of this view are two assumptions that reflect Perrow's (1967) thinking about how work environments shape non-routine tasks. First, educational researchers who argue that teaching is a non-routine task usually assume that teachers continuously vary their instructional activities in response to the diverse and dynamic needs of students. This creates task variety. In addition, these researchers assume that teachers lack a systematic and highly rationalized body of knowledge about teaching and learning, leading teachers also to experience a great deal of task uncertainty.

The roots of this view can be found in several early studies of teaching and schooling, especially Bidwell's (1965) seminal analysis of schools as formal organizations and Philip Jackson's (1968) pioneering study of teaching in elementary school classrooms. Jackson (1968), in particular, argued that classrooms were dynamic work environments that required teachers to engage in hundreds of interactions and make hundreds of decisions each day. He also argued that teachers lacked an elaborate technical vocabulary to describe their work and therefore tended to approach teaching from an intuitive, rather than rational standpoint. In this sense, Jackson's (1968) work was among the first—and one of the best empirical studies—to suggest that classroom teaching is inherently variable and uncertain in nature.

Teaching as a Routine Task

While Jackson's (1968) book is a classic analysis of the complexity of teaching, it also contained a number of ambiguities that raise doubts about the extent to which teaching should be viewed as a non-routine task. For example, Jackson argued that teachers lacked an elaborate technical vocabulary (creating task uncertainty), but he also cautioned readers that his interview methodology could easily have led him to overstate the amount of task uncertainty faced by teachers, especially if teachers knowledge was tacit and not easily surfaced in everyday discourse. Thus, Jackson held out the possibility that teachers—in fact—experienced more task certainty than he portrayed in his book. In addition, Jackson (1968: 8) portrayed classrooms as a complex and dynamic work environments; but he also argued that there was a "ritualistic and cyclic quality [to] the activities carried on in classrooms" and that "the identifiable forms of classroom activity are not great in number." This suggests that there is less task variety in classrooms than he argued was present.

Given the ambiguities in Jackson's (1968) work, it makes sense to consider an alternative perspective on the nature of teachers' work, especially a perspective found in research conducted by Michael Apple and colleagues. Rather than viewing teaching as a non-routine task, Apple and colleagues argue that teaching has become a highly routinized form of work, especially in recent years (see, for example, McNeil, 1986; Apple, 1990; Bullough, Gitlin, and Goldstein, 1991). Using a neo-Marxist perspective, for example, Apple and colleagues argue that the progressive rationalization and bureaucratization of schooling are leading to the increased routinization and standardization of teachers' work, a situation that has markedly reduced the inherent variability and uncertainty of teaching observed earlier by Bidwell (1965) and Jackson (1968). Apple and colleagues also argue that curriculum controls promulgated by state and local bureaucracies in the past decade have defined student needs in terms of a narrow set of pre-determined learning objectives, and that associated pressures for bureaucratic accountability have forced teachers to rely primarily on drill and practice routines in order to meet these objectives. In this argument, the task uncertainty and task variety that others see as characterizing teaching in more spontaneous settings is seen by Apple and colleagues as substantially eroded when teachers repeatedly use the same instructional routines to address a narrow range of well-specified learning objectives.

The observations of Apple, McNeil, and others are consistent with a great deal of research on classroom teaching. For example, Doyle's (1983) classic analysis of classroom management suggests that academic work in schools is frequently focused on low-level, procedural tasks that reduce task uncertainties for students and teachers alike. Moreover, ecological research in classrooms repeatedly finds that teachers rely on just three or four instructional routines to accomplish the majority of their instructional work (Weinstien, 1991). Given these findings, it not surprising that many observational studies find a pervasive pattern of bland, repetitive, and emotionally flat instruction in classrooms (Goodlad, 1984; Powell, Cohen, and Farrar, 1985). Moreover, this pattern of teaching apparently has a long history in schools. Cuban (1984), for example, suggests that lecture and recitation have been the dominant modes of instruction in classrooms since the founding of modern, bureaucratic schooling. All in all, then, a substantial body of research suggests that teaching can be viewed as a routine task.

Teaching as an Expert Task

Yet another view of teaching holds that teaching is an "expert" task. The roots of this view can be found in early process-product research, where analysts argued that effective teaching involves the ability of teachers to implement multiple task routines in the face of ever-changing circumstances. Here is a view of teaching as characterized by high task variety (e.g., expert teachers use multiple teaching strategies), but low task uncertainty (e.g., expert teachers *know* when to apply these routines in classrooms). Brophy and Evertson (1976) presented a cogent summary of this view when they argued that:

> Effective teaching [involves] the ability to implement a very large number of diagnostic, managerial, and therapeutic skills, tailoring behavior in specific contexts and situations to the demands of the moment. Effective teachers [are] not only...able to do a large number of things, they [are] also [able to] recognize which of the many things they know how to do applies at a given moment and...follow through by performing the behavior effectively.

In the 1980's and 1990's, this view has been extended in two further lines of work. One line of work examines the complex and interactive nature of classroom decision making (e.g., Clark and Peterson, 1986). In this literature, we get the sense that teaching occurs in a complex and dynamic environment requiring teachers to continually vary their instructional routines. A second line of research uses expert-novice comparisons and logical analyses to describe the bodies of knowledge that teachers use as they cope with the complexities of classroom work (e.g., Shulman, 1986; Berliner, 1987). Both lines of work have been incorporated into newly emerging professional standards, which increasingly emphasize the need for teachers to flexibly apply a large number of teaching strategies to the diverse needs of individual students (for a discussion, see Darling-Hammond, Wise, and Klein, 1995). Thus, all of these views portray teaching as an "expert" task—that is, a task in which the complex and dynamic environment of classrooms gives rise to high levels of task variety, but one in which various forms of teacher knowledge reduce task uncertainty and allow teachers to apply multiple routines in their work.

Teaching as an Amateur Task

The final model of teachers' instructional work shown in Table 2 can be described as a model of "amateur" teaching. Educational researchers rarely discuss this kind of teaching, in large part because they tend to study the practices of *professional* teachers in K-12 schools rather than the practices of amateur teachers in everyday settings. Nevertheless, one can easily imagine what teaching by an amateur might look like. Cohen (1988), for example, observed that lay people tend to use a very simple model of "teaching as telling" in everyday teaching situations, in large part because they lack an understanding of, or training in, alternative models of instruction. What emerges from Cohen's (1988) observation is a view of amateur teaching as a task that is low in task variety but high in task uncertainty.

Daft and McIntosh (1978) provide further evidence that these traits characterize amateur teaching. These authors found that university teachers tended to view their work as low on task variety but high on task uncertainty. Given that most university instructors lack formal training in pedagogy, this description lends credence to the idea that amateurs rely on a limited set of routines when teaching, largely because they lack the formal technical knowledge required to support more varied instructional practices. Of course, one would hope that amateur teaching is rare in K-12 schools, but professional teachers can assume the role of amateurs in some circumstances, for example, when they are first learning to teach, or when they are assigned to classes for which they have little academic preparation. In fact, some evidence suggests that teachers who are teaching out of subject frequently resort to teacher-directed instructional routines and focus on low-level cognitive tasks in order to reduce task uncertainties and control task variety (for a review, see Talbert, McLaughlin, and Rowan, 1993).

VARIATION IN THE NATURE OF TEACHERS' INSTRUCTIONAL WORK

It is tempting to assume that one—and only one—of these views of teaching is accurate. However, such a view is not very fruitful. A large body of research on work in many different occupations demonstrates that the nature of work performed by members of the *same* occupation can vary widely depending on the context within which it takes place (for a review of the literature on occupations generally, see Simpson, 1985; for evidence on variation in the nature of teachers' work, see Rowan, Raudenbush, and Cheong, 1993; Rowan, 1999). As a result, it makes sense for researchers interested in the nature of teachers' work to acknowledge that multiple models of teaching might be valid *and* to investigate the circumstances that make one model of teaching more likely than another to be present in a given situation.

In Tables 2 through 4 below, I present data demonstrating this point. The tables show persuasively that the nature of teachers' work varies across teachers and that this variation is accounted for by reference to properties of teachers and the context in which they work. The data on which the tables are based were collected in 1991 by CRC researchers who administered a questionnaire to a sample of over 500 teachers working in 16 diverse high schools in California and Michigan. The sample of schools in the study was constructed purposively to represent the great diversity of teaching contexts. It included eight comprehensive high schools located in urban and suburban areas; two small, alternative high schools serving students who had dropped out of regular high schools; two small, privately controlled academies that served elite clientele; and four publicly-controlled, magnet high schools located in urban areas.

CRC researchers achieved an average response rate of about 75 percent in these schools and thus collected useable data from just over 500 teachers. The teachers worked in all of the subject-matter departments in high schools, were highly educated (68 percent had Masters' degrees) and highly experienced (18 years of teaching experience on average). Ninety percent were White, and 55 percent were female. Although the sample was *not* constructed to be representative of the broad population of high school teachers in the United States, the demographic characteristics of the teachers in the sample were similar to national averages for all secondary school teachers in the nation at the time of the study.

Measures of Task Variety and Task Uncertainty

In the tables presented below, I measured teachers' perceptions of work using a set of questionnaire items originally developed by Daft and McIntosh (1978) to assess workers' perceptions of task variety and task uncertainty. To make these general items more applicable to the context of teaching, I modified the original items through slight changes in wording. The Daft and McIntosh items, as modified here, were used to measure two dimensions of work discussed by Perrow (1967) and described in Table 1. *Task variety* is measured by a four-item scale with an internal consistency of .79 (as measured by Cronbach's alpha); *task uncertainty* is measured by a three-item scale with an internal consistency of .68 (as measured by Cronbach's alpha).

In Table 2, I used the data collected by CRC researchers to classify teachers' responses into the fourfold scheme developed by Perrow (1967) and presented in Table 1. To accomplish this classification, I averaged teachers' responses to all of the items on a given scale and then classified each teacher as scoring "high" or "low" on a particular scale according to

TABLE 2
Cross-Tabulation of Teachers' Responses to Measures of Task Variety and Task Uncertainty

		Task Variety	
		Low	*High*
Task Uncertainty	*Low*	Routine (n = 286) 47%	Expert (n = 211) 35%
	High	Amateur (n = 19) 3%	Non-routine (n = 87) 14%

whether the teacher's average score on the scale was above or below the midpoint. Thus, a teacher was classified as being low on task variety or task uncertainty if s(he) had an average score of 3.5 or lower on a six-point scale, and high if s(he) had an average score of greater than 3.5 on a six point scale.

Table 2 shows the results of this analysis. In the sample, 47 percent of the teachers viewed their work as routine (i.e., as characterized by low task variety and low task uncertainty); another 35 percent saw their work as a kind of "expert" teaching (i.e., characterized by high task variety but low task uncertainty); 14 percent reported their work to be non-routine (i.e., high in task variety and high in task uncertainty); and only 3 percent reported their work as having the properties of "amateur" teaching (i.e., low in task variety but high in task uncertainty). The data confirm an important point—that the nature of teachers' work varies within the population of teachers. The table also shows that variation is more pronounced along some dimensions of work than others. In particular, there is far more variation in teachers' perceptions of task variety than there is variation in teachers' perceptions of task uncertainty. Overall, however, the table raises an interesting question: Why do such a large number of teachers in the sample view their work as routine, and why do an equally large number see teaching as an expert task? In the next section, I turn to this problem.

HYPOTHESES ABOUT VARIATION IN THE NATURE OF TEACHERS' WORK

The researchers who designed the CRC study initially operated under the assumption that organizational features of schools would account for variations in the ways teachers conducted their instructional work, and they purposively sampled schools with diverse missions and structures in order to investigate this hypothesis. However, my colleagues and I soon discovered that variation in many features of teachers' work is accounted for, not so much by variables like school size, mission, or structure (although these variables do exercise an effect over the nature of teachers work) as by other features of the instructional milieu. This should be the case especially with respect to the properties of teachers' work that are being studied here, namely the extent to which teachers experience task variety and task uncertainty. In this section, I briefly discuss school effects on teachers' task conceptions, but then quickly turn my attention to other features of teachers' instructional work that hold more promise for explaining differences among teachers in their perceptions of task variety and task uncertainty.

School Effects on Teachers' Work

I begin by examining the extent to which teachers' perceptions of task variety and task uncertainty vary across schools in the sample. As discussed above, school effects on the nature of teachers' work might be especially pronounced in the CRC sample because the schools in the study differed significantly in the missions they pursued, the students they served, and the kinds of instructional arrangements found within them (for empirical evidence on the effects of these variables on teachers' task perceptions, see Rowan, Raudenbush, and Cheong, 1993).

In an analysis not shown here, I examined the school effects question by decomposing the variance in teachers' reports of task variety and task uncertainty into within- and between-school components using the method described in Raudenbush, Rowan, and Kang (1991). In the analysis, a relatively small proportion of variance in the measures of these constructs was found to lie among schools. For example, only 14 percent of the variance in teachers' reports of task variety was among schools, while about 24 percent of the variance in task uncertainty was among schools. Given the small number of schools in the sample, I was unable to examine in any detail the potentially large number of school-level variables that might account for these observed differences among schools, but informal inspection of the data suggested that teachers in the smaller, private, and alternative high schools in the sample were more likely to report high levels of task variety and task uncertainty than were teachers in the larger, publicly-controlled, comprehensive and magnet high schools.

Within-School Variation in Teachers' Work

As in other studies my colleagues and I conducted, the results of the variance decomposition suggest that a large percentage of the variance in teachers' perceptions of task variety and task uncertainty lies among teachers within schools. Thus, as a next step in the analysis, I turned to explaining why teachers in the *same* school might view their work differently.

Teacher Education and Experience

One obvious source of variation in teachers' reports of task variety and task uncertainty would be differences in teachers' education and experience. In theory, at least, we can assume that more highly-educated teachers will view their task in ways that approximate the model of "expert" teaching shown in Table 1, especially since a major purpose of teacher education is to train teachers in alternative approaches to teaching (thus increasing task variety) *and* to provide teachers with a systematic body of knowledge about instruction (thus decreasing task uncertainty). This leads to the expectation that teachers with higher levels of education will be more likely to report high levels of task variety and low levels of task uncertainty than less educated teachers. We can predict similar effects for teacher experience. As teachers gain experience in classrooms, they should develop a broader repertoire of teaching activities, and their own observations and reflections about teaching should lead to them to develop reasonably sound theories about the cause and effect relationships governing teaching effectiveness. In the analyses that follow, I measured teachers' level of education with a dummy variable (coded as 1 = MA or above, and 0 = less than MA); teachers' experience was measured by total years in teaching.

Teachers' Disciplinary Specialization

Other research suggests that teachers' instructional work can be shaped in important ways by the academic division of labor in high schools. For example, Jackson (1986) argued that the school disciplines have different cultures, and that a key feature of these disciplinary cultures is that they include a set of epistemological assumptions about the nature of knowledge and how it can best be taught to students. In particular, Jackson (1986), following the influence of C.P. Snow (1959), argued that teaching in the natural sciences and mathematics would be organized around the assumption that knowledge is easily reproduced and "transmitted" to learners, while teaching in the social sciences and humanities would be based on the assumption that knowledge is dynamic and uncertain. In the natural sciences and mathematics, then, we might expect teachers' to engage in much more lecture and recitation in an effort to transmit a fixed body of knowledge to students, while teachers in the social sciences and humanities might function more like "artists and creators" (Jackson, 1986: 122).

Jackson's (1986) arguments imply that teachers of high school mathematics and natural sciences will report teaching to be more routine than teachers of social studies and English. For example, the assumption that knowledge is relatively fixed should reduce task uncertainty, while the "transmission" orientation to teaching should decrease task variety. In fact, some evidence supports this proposition. In an important study of elementary school teaching, Stodolsky (1988) found that instruction was characterized by less task variety in mathematics than in social studies. Similarly, in a study of high school teachers, Rowan, Raudenbush, and Cheong (1993) found that mathematics teachers were more likely than others to view their work as routine. Thus, the academic subjects taught by teachers should affect the nature of teacher's work, with math and science teachers implementing more routinized forms of instructional work than English and social studies teachers. In this study, I tested these arguments by creating a set of dummy variables to represent each of the academic subjects taught in high school, and I used these dummy variables to code the subject most frequently taught by a given teacher in the sample.

Teachers' instructional beliefs

While a study that focused only on the variables I have discussed to this point would make an important empirical contribution to research on teachers' work, my central concern is not with these variables. Instead, my main purpose is to investigate whether teachers who adopt beliefs consistent with socio-cognitive and constructivist approaches to teaching report more task variety and task uncertainty in their work. As discussed earlier, an interest in this problem stems from the increased attention being given in the education reform literature to instructional strategies grounded in these beliefs and from the assumption of school restructuring theorists that instructional practices grounded in these beliefs have the capacity to make teachers' instructional work more complex and non-routine.

Using data collected from the CRC questionnaires, I developed two different measures of teachers' beliefs or "theories" about instruction. Clearly, teachers can hold many different beliefs about instruction, but I was interested in teachers' beliefs along two main dimensions. First, I developed a measure of the extent to which teachers' endorsed *constructivist theories of instruction.* Following Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1987), I assumed that teachers who endorsed constructivist theories of instruction would emphasize mastery of complex or "whole" tasks in their teaching. I also assumed that these teachers would emphasize the dynamic and socially-constructed nature of knowledge and therefore place greater emphasis on four additional aspects of classroom teaching: the use of classroom discussion (in addition to lecture and recitation), the choice of work assignments by students, the constant revision of classroom assignments by students, and the application of creative thinking to learning tasks. All of these practices, I reasoned, should make the task of teaching more non-routine. For example, an emphasis on higher-order and creative thinking should make instruction more uncertain for students and teachers alike, while the use of indirect and participatory forms of instruction should increase variation in classroom activities. To operationalize these ideas, I developed a six-item scale to measure the extent to which teachers' endorsed constructivist views of instruction.

In addition, I developed a measure of the extent to which teachers endorsed what I reasoned is a strongly contrasting viewpoint about teaching, one that I labeled as *behaviorist theories of instruction.* In education, many analysts have assumed that behaviorist theories of learning and instruction have encouraged the implementation of a particular form of instruction, one that breaks complex forms of knowledge into discrete instructional objectives and that organizes and presents these objectives in a sequence that begins with basic skills and only later progresses to instruction in more advanced academic tasks (e.g., Resnick, 1985). In American education, behaviorist approaches to learning and instruction have been associated with increased pressures for accountability and have spawned a rationalized technology of teaching in which student achievement is frequently monitored and test results are used to control student movement through standardized curricula. These are precisely the aspects of instruction that Apple and colleagues have argued lead to the routinization of teaching. As a result, I predicted that teachers who endorsed behaviorist theories of instruction would be more likely than others to view teaching as a routine task (i.e., characterized by low task variety and low task uncertainty). To operationalize these ideas, I developed a five-item scale to measure the extent to which teachers endorsed behaviorist theories of instruction.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSES OF VARIATION IN THE NATURE OF TEACHERS' WORK

In order to investigate the hypotheses just presented, I conducted a series of two-level, HLM regression analyses using the computer program HLM/2L (Bryk, Raudenbush, Seltzer, and Congdon, 1988). The analysis proceeded in several steps. First, following previous research (Rowan, 1999), I included two variables that would control for the gender and ethnicity of teachers. These variables, while not of particular theoretical interest in this paper, sometimes have effects on the dependent variables of interest here.

As a first step in the analyses, I looked at whether teachers with different levels of education, different years of teaching experience, and different disciplinary assignments varied in their endorsement of constructivist and behaviorist theories of instruction. In these analyses, the independent variables of interest were thus:

1. GENDER, which is the sex of the respondent (where 0 = female, 1 = male);
2. ETHNICITY of the respondent (where 0 = White; and 1 = other);
3. EDUCATION, the level of education of the respondent (where 1 = MA and above);
4. EXPERIENCE, the years of teaching experience of the respondent; and
5. a series of dummy variables representing whether a teacher's main teaching assignment was in ENGLISH, MATH, SCIENCE, or SOCIAL STUDIES (where the contrast variable included all other subjects).

The dependent variables in the analysis were CONSTRUCTIVISIM, the respondent's score on constructivist beliefs scale, and BEHAVIORISM, the respondent's score on the behaviorist beliefs scale.

Table 3 shows the results of this analysis. The statistical models shown in the table are random intercepts, fixed effects models in which all of the independent variables were grand-mean centered. Two separate HLM regression analyses are reported, one with CONSTRUCTIVISM as the dependent variable, the other with BEHAVIORISM as the dependent variable.

The data in Table 3 show that teachers' disciplinary assignments affect their beliefs about instruction. For example, just as Jackson (1986) and Snow (1959) would predict, the data show that English and Social Studies teachers—whose instructional work is grounded in the humanities—are more likely to endorse constructivist beliefs about instruction than are science teachers and teachers of other subjects. Moreover, the teachers scoring lowest on the constructivist beliefs scale are those who teach mathematics. The results are almost completely reversed when we look at teachers' endorsements of behaviorist beliefs. Here, we see that mathematics teachers have the strongest behaviorist beliefs, followed by teachers of other subjects, and then by English, science, and social studies teachers, who are least likely to endorse behaviorist beliefs. In an analysis not reported here, I found that the disciplinary contrasts accounted for 21 percent of the within-school variance in the constructivist beliefs scale and 11 percent of the within-school variance in the behaviorist beliefs scale. It should be noted that none of the differences in beliefs found across disciplines are due to differences in the demographic composition of teachers who teach different subjects, for as Table 3 shows, teachers' levels of education and experience, and teachers' gender and ethnicity do not have effects on beliefs about instruction. The only exception is the isolated, negative effect of gender on the BEHAVIORISM scale, with females scoring lower on this scale than males.

In Table 4, I turn to an analysis of teachers' perceptions of task variety and task uncertainty. Once again, the statistical models presented here are random intercept, fixed slopes models, where all of the independent variables of interest are grand mean centered. In this table, I examine not only the effects of teachers' gender, ethnicity, experience, education, and disciplinary specialization on perceptions of task variety and task uncertainty, I also examine the effects of the instructional beliefs scales developed for this paper—the CONSTRUCTIVIST scale and the BEHAVIORIST scale.

The data in Table 4 confirm most of the hypotheses discussed above. First, and most importantly, the largest effects on teachers' perceptions of task variety and task uncertainty come from teachers' endorsement of behaviorist or constructivist theories instruction. As expected, the more a given teacher endorsed constructivism, the more that teacher also

TABLE 3
HLM/2L Regression Analysis Showing Effects of Teacher Characteristics and Disciplinary Assignment on Constructivist and Behaviorist Beliefs*

	Constructivism	*Behaviorism*
Sex		
β (standard error)		-.185 (.060)
t-statistic		-3.07
p-value		.003
Ethnicity		
β (standard error)		
t-statistic		
p-value		
Experience		
β (standard error)		
t-statistic		
p-value		
Education		
β (standard error)		
t-statistic		
p-value		
English		
β (standard error)	.623 (.074)	-.340 (.082)
t-statistic	8.47	-4.14
p-value	.000	.000
Math		
β (standard error)	-.284 (.077)	.214 (.087)
t-statistic	-3.66	2.461
p-value	.000	.014
Science		
β (standard error)		-.332 (.084)
t-statistic		-3.95
p-value		.000
Social Studies		
β (standard error)	.166 (.080)	-.245 (.089)
t-statistic	2.107	-2.76
p-value	.035	.006

Notes: *Statistics are from within-school portion of two-level model. Table includes all variables entered into regression equation, but coefficients are shown only for variables with statistically significant effects (p-value less than or equal to .10).

TABLE 4
HLM/2L Regression Analysis Showing Effects of Teacher Characteristics and Instructional Beliefs on Task Variety and Task Uncertainty*

	Task Variety	*Task Uncertainty*
Sex		
b (standard error)	-.159 (.066)	
t-statistic	-2.39	
p-value	.017	
Ethnicity		
b (standard error)		.159 (.097)
t-statistic		1.64
p-value		.10
Experience		
b (standard error)	-.132 (.051)	-.268 (.049)
t-statistic	-2.59	-5.49
p-value	.010	.000
Education		
b (standard error)		-.146 (.072)
t-statistic		-2.02
p-value		.043
Constructivism		
b (standard error)	.476 (.056)	.137 (.054)
t-statistic	8.72	2.54
p-value	.000	.011
Behaviorism		
b (standard error)	-.13 (.052)	-.406 (.051)
t-statistic	-2.56	-7.93
p-value	.011	.000

Notes: *Statistics are from within-school portion of two-level model. Table includes all variables entered into regression equation, but coefficients are shown only for variables with statistically significant effects (p-value less than or equal to .10).

reported higher levels task variety and task uncertainty, suggesting that constructivist beliefs make teaching a more non-routine task. By contrast, the more a teacher endorsed behaviorist theories of instruction, the more that teacher reported lower levels of task variety and task uncertainty, suggesting that behaviorist beliefs are associated with the routinization of teachers' work. The large magnitude of these effects can be demonstrated by the zero-order correlations among the instructional beliefs scales and the scales measuring task variety and task uncertainty. Using the method described in Raudenbush et al. (1991), I found that constructivist beliefs were positively and highly correlated to task variety (r = .54) and positively and moderately correlated to task uncertainty (r = .20). This same correlational analysis found that behaviorist beliefs were negatively and highly correlated to task uncertainty (r = -.53) and negatively and modestly correlated to task variety (r = -.17).

The data in Table 4 also suggest that disciplinary specialization has effects on teachers' perceptions of task variety and task uncertainty work, but such effects work primarily through the effects of disciplinary specialization on teachers' beliefs about instruction. Thus, a teacher's disciplinary specialization affects that teacher's beliefs about instruction, but it is a teacher's beliefs about instruction, rather than the teacher's disciplinary assignment *per se,* which have statistically significant effects on a teachers' perceptions of task variety and task uncertainty. The other variables in the regression models have small and inconsistent effects on task perceptions. For example, teacher experience and teacher education show the expected negative effects on task uncertainty, but are unrelated to task variety, while women teachers report greater task uncertainty, but not greater task variety. Overall, the independent variables accounted for 20 percent of the within-school variance in task variety and 35 percent of the within-school variance in task uncertainty.

DISCUSSION

The conceptual framework and data analyses presented here contribute to several areas of educational research. For one, they inform continuing debates about the nature of teachers' work. In this paper, for example, I showed how a model grounded in contingency theory could be used to capture important arguments about the nature of teachers' work. From this perspective, an important finding of the paper appears to be that teachers do not see their work as many organization theorists do, that is, as a non-routine form of work. Instead, most of the teachers in this sample viewed teaching either as a routine task or as an "expert" task.

A second contribution of this paper is the finding that teachers' conceptions of task are shaped by the convergence of two highly correlated factors—the discipline within which they work and their beliefs about learning and teaching. As the data showed, teachers working in different academic disciplines tended to have different views about the nature of academic knowledge and about desirable teaching practices. In the data presented here, for example, the strongest contrast was between English and mathematics teachers. English teachers, more than all others, endorsed a constructivist view of teaching, seeing knowledge in their subject area as dynamic, and emphasizing creativity, classroom discussion, and student-directed learning in their teaching. In contrast, mathematics teachers saw knowledge as relatively cut-and-dried, felt a strong need to cover a fixed curriculum, and endorsed the idea that knowledge was best learned in small chunks organized in a sequence from basic to higher order skills.

No matter what the discipline, a teacher's endorsement of constructivist and behaviorist theories of instruction had important effects on task perceptions. Teachers who viewed school knowledge as relatively fixed, sequenced, and standardized also viewed the task of teaching as relatively routine—that is, characterized by little task variety and little task uncertainty. By contrast, teachers who viewed school knowledge as more fluid, creative, and learner-constructed tended to report higher levels of task variety and task uncertainty, suggesting that they were moving toward a view of teaching as a non-routine task.

As interesting as these findings are, they present us with some important conundrums. As the data show, many teachers in the sample endorsed constructivist views of teaching, but few teachers ended up seeing teaching as a non-routine task. One question we need to ask, therefore, is why teachers who hold constructivist views of teaching don't see even more task variety and task uncertainty in their work than they reported. A related conundrum relates to the uneasy fit between the finding that constructivist beliefs increase the amount of task uncertainty faced by teachers and the current emphasis in education reform on the importance of teacher knowledge and expertise in promoting teaching effectiveness. The findings presented here suggest that as teachers come to endorse constructivist beliefs about teaching, they have fewer "established procedures" to rely on as they teach, move away from "an understandable sequence of steps" to guide their actions, and are thus faced with higher levels of task uncertainty. None of this corresponds well with current views of teaching as an expert task.

In the paper that follows, my purpose is to investigate these conundrums further. Having established that instructional beliefs grounded in socio-cognitive and constructivist views of learning and teaching make teachers' work more complex and uncertain, I explore how patterns of "organic" management intervene in the formation of task perceptions in order to reduce the task uncertainties felt by teachers who endorse constructivist beliefs. What I seek to investigate in the following paper is whether teachers who might otherwise find themselves in a situation in which their work becomes non-routine come instead to view their work as an "expert" task if they work in an environment characterized by organic management. The basic rationale for this question, and the empirical data to address it, are discussed in the paper that follows.

NOTES

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2. The labels for the cells shown in Table 1 differ from those originally appearing in Perrow (1967). This change is purposeful and designed to make the application of Perrow's work to research on teaching more straightforward to teachers. Despite the change in labels, the theoretical logic of my analysis conforms closely to Perrow's.

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CHAPTER 6

TEACHERS' WORK AND INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT, PART II

Does Organic Management Promote Expert Teaching?[1]

Brian Rowan

This paper uses ideas drawn from contingency theory to examine the extent to which the nature of teachers' instructional work affects and is affected by patterns of instructional management in schools. The paper develops a causal model positing that teachers who face increased task variety in their work will actively work to construct "organic" patterns of instructional management in their immediate working environment, thus leading to a reduction of task uncertainty and an increase in workplace motivation and commitment. Data gathered from a survey of high school teachers shows that this model is confirmed, but that the effect sizes are very small. The implications of these findings for research on school organization and management are considered.

In the preceding paper, I argued that a theoretical perspective on organizations known as contingency theory provides a useful way to conceptualize the instructional work of teachers. As discussed in that paper, contingency theorists have called attention to two important dimensions of teachers' work—*task variety* (which refers to the range of instructional activities that teachers engage in as they teach), and *task uncertainty* (which refers to the extent to which teachers have access to a systematic body of knowledge that can be used to guide their teaching activities). As I argued in the preceding paper, these two dimensions, when combined, produce a fourfold typology for describing the nature of teachers' work. Teachers who perceive low task variety and low task uncertainty can be said to view teaching as a routine task, while teachers who perceive high task variety and high task uncertainty can be said to view teaching as a non-routine task. Other "types" of teaching identified by this scheme include expert teaching (i.e., a view of teaching as high in task variety but low in task uncertainty) and amateur teaching (i.e., a view of teaching as low in task variety but high in task uncertainty).

Although previous educational research has tended to assume that all or most teachers fall within a single cell of this fourfold scheme, the empirical evidence presented in the preceding paper showed that teachers vary in their perceptions of task variety and task uncertainty. For example, in the sample of 16 diverse high schools in California and Michigan from which the sample of teachers in the preceding paper was drawn, 47 percent of the teachers viewed their work as routine (i.e., low in task variety and low in task uncertainty); another 35 percent saw their work as a kind of "expert" teaching (i.e., high in task variety but low in task uncertainty); 14 percent reported their work to be non-routine (i.e., high in task variety and high in task uncertainty); and 3 percent reported their work as having the properties of "amateur" teaching (i.e., low in task variety but high in task uncertainty). More importantly, the findings reported in the preceding paper suggested that teachers' perceptions of task variety and task uncertainty were a strong function of teachers' pedagogical beliefs and strategies, with teachers who endorsed what I called " behaviorist" theories of instruction being more likely to view the task of teaching as routine, while teachers who endorsed what I called "constructivist" theories of instruction being more likely to view teaching as a non-routine task.

THE PROBLEM

In this paper, I move from trying to account for variations in teachers' tasks perceptions to looking at how these task perceptions are related to patterns of instructional management in schools, particularly patterns frequently discussed in the literature on "school restructuring." Increasingly, advocates of school restructuring have argued that schools need to shift away from bureaucratic and hierarchical forms of instructional management towards what I have called *organic* forms of instructional management (for discussions of organic management, see Rowan, 1990; Rowan, Raudenbush, and Kang, 1991; Rowan, Raudenbush, and Cheong, 1993). In previous work, I have defined organic management as a network (as opposed to hierarchical) form of control involving supportive forms of instructional leadership, participative forms of instructional decision making, and high levels of collaboration among staff. In the literature on school restructuring, organic forms of instructional management in schools have been argued to be superior to bureaucratic forms of instructional management, especially in enhancing the management of complex forms of teaching entailed by constructivist views of learning and teaching (Rowan, 1990).

The purpose of this paper is to discuss why organic management might be well suited to the management of complex forms of teaching. The explanation presented here is grounded in three central ideas. First, I argue that organic forms of management arise in response to the complex and variable task situations faced by teachers using constructivist forms of teaching, that is, that task variety tends to lead teachers to seek out, and participate in, organic forms of management in their schools. Second, I argue that organic management tends to increase workplace learning and thereby reduce the task uncertainties that emerge as a result of constructivist teaching. Finally, I argue that as task uncertainty is reduced, teachers experience higher expectations for success, and greater workplace commitment, both of which have the potential to increase the productivity of teachers. From this perspective, a simple "causal" model can be posited linking the implementation of constructivist forms of teaching to organic forms of management, and from organic forms of management to worker expertise, motivation, and commitment. It is to a discussion of that model that I turn now, borrowing once again on ideas derived from contingency theory.

BACKGROUND

Findings from the preceding paper showed that teachers who endorsed constructivist approaches to instruction reported facing greater task variety and task uncertainty in their work. This suggests that there is a correlation between these two dimensions of work, a correlation that exists because as tasks become more variable in nature, the standard operating procedures that workers use to reduce task uncertainty no longer apply. Standard operating procedures, of course, are the hallmarks of centralized, bureaucratized forms of control, and contingency theorist argue that when workers facing task variety can no longer rely on bureaucratic forms of control they begin to construct what Burns and Stalker (1961) have called "network" forms of control. Under conditions of task variability, communication patterns shift from being primarily vertical in direction (i.e., up and down the hierarchy) to being multi-directional—that is, rich both laterally and hierarchically. In addition, authority begins to shift to whomever has expertise, such that workers at all levels of the formal hierarchy participate in key decisions and the formulation of task imperatives. As this occurs, organizations come to be characterized by organic forms of management—participative (as opposed to centralized) forms of decision making, collegial (as opposed to hierarchical) forms of control and direction, and supportive (as opposed to directive) forms of administrative leadership. In contingency theory, these forms of management are thought to arise precisely because they reduce the task uncertainty faced by workers under conditions of task variability, giving workers increased task knowledge and more confidence to resolve problems of practice. In this way, organic forms of management lead workers to become more committed to their work, to have higher expectations for success, and to be more motivated (for a review, see Rowan, 1990).

The arguments advanced by contingency theorists are particularly relevant to the conundrums that I noted at the end of the preceding paper. In particular, a major finding in the preceding paper was that teachers who endorsed constructivist beliefs about teaching tended to report more task variety *and* more task uncertainty in their work—that is, to be more likely to view teaching as a non-routine task. As I noted in the preceding paper, this finding creates an important conundrum for educational policy makers and practitioners. Reformers increasingly want teaching to become more of an "expert" task—that is, a task characterized by high levels of task variety, but *low* levels of task uncertainty. However, they also want more constructivist teaching—which, by increasing task uncertainty, tends to make teaching more of a non-routine task. So, policy makers want expert teachers, but they also endorse a form of instructional practice that promotes teaching as a non-routine task. An unresolved problem for policy makers, then, is how to promote constructivist forms of teaching while at the same time assuring that teaching becomes more of an expert task.

It is here that contingency theory comes into play. We have already seen (in the preceding paper) that teachers who endorse constructivist beliefs about classroom instruction will face higher levels of task variety, but contingency theory predicts that teachers who face increased task variety will develop more organic patterns of management in their immediate working environments to cope with this task uncertainty. Moreover, an increase in organic management should reduce task uncertainty (at least in contingency theory), implying that teachers' work under organic management would move toward more of an "expert" task. In fact, the argument of contingency theory corresponds quite well to the logic of reform embedded in the literature on school restructuring, where it is argued that organic forms of management are required to successfully implement complex forms of teaching—especially since they increase the expertise and motivation of teachers. What remains to be seen, however, is if the logic of this argument is consistent with the data at hand.

APPROACH

In order to examine and empirically test the logic of contingency theory (and of restructuring theorists), I formulated a series of five hypotheses to represent the complex relationships that contingency theory predicts should occur among task variety, task uncertainty, and organic forms of management. The first hypothesis is:

> $\mathbf{H_1}$: In teaching, increased levels of task variety are associated with increased levels of task uncertainty.

The basic assumption here is that teachers who work in dynamic task environments characterized by task variety will find it difficult to follow standard operating procedures and routines, in large part because dynamic work environments require a great many such routines and because, when many such routines are required, it becomes extremely difficult to formalize and enact routines in the workplace (Perrow, 1967). But, as standard operating routines become less salient, task uncertainty increases.

One can easily see from the findings discussed in the preceding paper how a classroom guided by constructivist principles would present a situation like that described in $\mathbf{H_1}$. In that paper, constructivist beliefs were assumed to emphasize four aspects of classroom teaching: the extensive use of classroom discussion (in addition to lecture and recitation), the choice of work assignments by students, the constant revision of classroom assignments by students, and the application of creative thinking to learning tasks. We have already seen that teachers who endorse such practices report higher levels of task variety, and it is easy to see why task variety would lead to task uncertainty. The dynamic nature of instructional work in constructivist classrooms—the constantly shifting patterns of instructional activity, the flexibility required to teach in a student centered environment, and the need to constantly respond to the creative formulations of students should all work to decrease teachers' ability to rely on standardized operating routines in teaching and thereby increase task uncertainty.

A second hypothesis to be explored here is that teachers who face higher levels of task variety in their work seek to establish organic patterns of management. In particular:

> $\mathbf{H_2}$: As task variety in teaching increases, teachers and administrative leaders seek to establish organic patterns of management in the school environment, patterns which involve increased teacher participation in decision making, increased reliance on collaboration and collegial forms of support, and increased levels of supportive (as opposed to directive) forms of school leadership.

The rationale for this prediction is drawn from the writings of contingency theorists such as Burns and Stalker (1961) and Perrow (1967). These scholars argue that as task variety increases in a dynamic work environment, workers face increasing numbers of exceptions to standard operating procedures. In a bureaucratically organized workplace, such exceptions typically are referred up the hierarchy to supervisors, and workers have to wait until new standard operating procedures (designed to cope with each exception) are formulated centrally and communicated back down the chain of command. When exceptions are few in number, this process makes sense, but as the number of exceptions increases markedly, the hierarchy can become flooded with problems, and as this occurs, workers find it difficult to wait for the centrally formulated responses of increasingly overloaded administrative superiors. In this situation, contingency theorists argue that workers begin to look more to their immediate co-workers than to hierarchical superiors for task support—that is, to colleagues, to foreman and/or other nearby supervisors—to become more involved in task decision making. All of this makes problem resolution speedier, and thus a network form of control tends to emerge, especially under norms of rationality (see, e.g. Galbraith, 1973; Burns and Stalker, 1967).

The next series of hypotheses show how the development of "organic" patterns of management can promote teacher expertise and improve task performance. Here, we develop three main hypotheses. First, the presence of organic management gives workers facing dynamic task environments much speedier access to problem resolution, which in turn allows workers to implement newly-developed and/or newly-discovered routines in their work. This, I argue, reduces task uncertainty. This occurs, of course, because a particular process is operating, namely the production of workplace learning. Thus, an additional, and closely related, hypothesis is that collegial and supportive environments lead to workplace learning, and workplace learning, in turn, reduces task uncertainty. A final hypothesis in this chain of logic connects increased teacher learning, and reduced task uncertainty, to the improvement of teachers' general motivation for work. Here, we can argue that teachers who feel less uncertainty, and who experience more workplace learning, will become more committed to their work and have higher expectations for success (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Rosenholz, 1989). Motivation, in turn, should help increase performance. To capture these arguments, we can formulate three hypotheses:

H_3: In teaching, the presence of organic patterns of management increases teachers' workplace learning.

H_4: In teaching, the presence of organic management and increased workplace learning reduce task uncertainty.

> **H_5**: Teachers who report working under organic management and who experience higher levels of workplace learning also report higher levels of workplace commitment and higher expectations of success.

Using this logic, we can now see how the implementation of constructivist patterns of instructional practice can lead to increases in what we have called "expert" teaching. First, constructivist forms of teaching tend to increase task variety, leading teachers and administrators to seek out and establish organic patterns of instructional management. This, in turns, leads to increased workplace learning and reduced task uncertainty. And all of this, in turn, increases teachers' general motivation and commitment to work.

SAMPLE

The data to test these hypotheses come from the same source as data for the preceding paper. The data were collected in 1991 by researchers at the Center for Research on the Context of Teaching (CRC) who administered a questionnaire to a sample of over 500 teachers working in 16 diverse high schools in California and Michigan. The sample of schools in the study was constructed purposively to represent the great diversity of teaching contexts. It included eight comprehensive high schools located in urban and suburban areas; two small, alternative high schools serving students who had dropped out of regular high schools; two small, privately controlled academies that served elite clientele; and four publicly-controlled, magnet high schools located in urban areas.

CRC researchers achieved an average response rate of about 75 percent in these schools and thus collected useable data from just over 500 teachers. The teachers worked in all of the subject-matter departments in high schools, were highly educated (68 percent had Masters' degrees) and highly experienced (18 years of teaching experience on average). Ninety percent were White, and 55 percent were female. Although the sample was *not* constructed to be representative of the broad population of high school teachers in the United States, the demographic characteristics of the teachers in the sample were similar to national averages for all secondary school teachers in the nation at the time of the study.

MEASURES

The analysis focuses on testing the five hypotheses discussed above. **H_1** involves examining the relationship among task variety and task uncer-

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tainty, constructs that are measured in the same way in this paper as in the preceding paper. *Task variety* was measured by a four-item scale with an internal consistency of .79 (as measured by Cronbach's alpha) and *task uncertainty* was measured by a three-item scale with an internal consistency of .68 (as measured by Cronbach's alpha).

H_2 examines the association of task variety to measures of organic management. To measure organic management, I used exactly the same variables that my colleagues and I have used in previously published research (Rowan et al., 1991, 1993). One dimension of organic management is *staff cooperation.* This was measured with an eight-item scale measuring cooperation and collaboration among school staff. The items in this scale ask about a variety of dimensions of staff cooperation, including the extent to which members help each other in diverse duties, share beliefs and values about the central mission of the school, maintain uniformly high standards for performance, and seek new ideas. The internal consistency of the scale, as assessed by Cronbach's alpha = .86. A second element of organic management, *teacher control,* was measured with a nine-item scale composed of questions asking about teachers' participation in and control over decisions about student behavior codes, the content of professional development, student grouping, text selection, teaching content and techniques, and amount of homework assigned to students. The internal consistency of the scale, as assessed by Cronbach's alpha = .75. A third dimension of organic management is *supportive leadership,* which was measured with a 13-item scale composed of items referring to aspects of administrative leadership in schools, including such activities as effectively coping with outside pressures, setting priorities, recognizing, encouraging, and supporting staff, and involving staff in decision making. The internal consistency of the scale, as assessed by Cronbach's alpha = .94. Because our previous research suggests that these separate measures of organic management are intercorrelated, we created a fourth—summary measure—that simply combined all 30 items into a single measure which we labeled *organic management.* The internal consistency of this measure (as measured by Cronbach's alpha) = .94.

H_3 through **H_5** investigate the relationship between organic management and three teacher outcomes—teachers' reported workplace learning, teachers' reported job commitment, and teachers' expectations for teaching success. I measured teachers' *workplace learning* with a three-item scale asking teachers to rate opportunities for learning on the job, where they report on the extent to which they feel supported by colleagues to try our new ideas, are eager to hear about ways to improve as a teacher, and are improving as a teacher. The internal consistency of the scale, as assessed by Cronbach's alpha = .75. I measured teachers' overall *job commitment* with an eight-item scale assessing teachers' commitment to students, to the school, and to teaching in general. Items in the scale measure teachers' perceptions of the amount of effort, enjoyment, and enthusiasm they bring to their work, as well as their interest in remaining in their current teaching assignment, current school, and the teaching profession. The internal consistency of the scale, as assessed by Cronbach's alpha = .75. Finally, I measured teachers' *expectations for teaching success* with a three-item scale that asked teachers to rate the extent to which they think they can reach difficult students, insure that students achieve at a high level, and make a difference in students' lives. The internal consistency of the scale, as assessed by Cronbach's alpha = .68.

Finally, as in previous analyses, I controlled for a number of teacher characteristics in the analyses. The control variables used here were:

1. *gender,* which is the sex of the respondent (where 0 = female, 1 = male);
2. *ethnicity* of the respondent (where 0 = White; and 1 = other);
3. *education,* the level of education of the respondent (where 1 = MA and above); and
4. *experience,* the years of teaching experience of the respondent.

I did not use variables representing the academic subject that constituted a teachers' main teaching assignment since previous analyses suggested that all of the effects of teaching assignments on the main variables of interest were accounted for by measures of task variety and task uncertainty.

RESULTS

In order to test hypotheses $H_1 - H_5$, I conducted a series of two-level, HLM regression analyses using the computer program HLM/2L (Bryk, Raudenbush, Seltzer, and Congdon, 1988). The statistical models shown in the tables are random intercepts, fixed effects models in which all independent variables were grand-mean centered. In what follows, we are interested in hypotheses concerning differences among teachers *within* schools—not differences in outcomes across schools. That is, we have argued (and found in the preceding paper) that there is a great deal of variation in teachers' task perceptions within schools, and as a result, we therefore expect to find variance *within* schools in:

a. the presence of organic management; and
b. teachers' reports of professional learning opportunities, job commitment, and expectations for success.

This does not mean that we are uninterested in differences among schools in dependent variables, but the thrust of this paper is to develop a theory that operates to explain variance among teachers within schools—not variance among schools—in the dependent variables. For a detailed rationale for studying within-school variations in variables like organic management and teacher outcomes, see Rowan, Raudenbush, and Kang (1991).

The first hypothesis (**H_1**) is that teachers who face increased levels of task variety also face increased levels of task uncertainty. Table 1 shows the results of a two-level HLM regression analysis in which task uncertainty is the dependent variable, and the independent variables are task variety plus teachers' sex, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, and levels of education. As the table shows, teachers who face higher levels of task variety report higher levels of task uncertainty (β = .39, p = .051, adjusted R^2 within schools = .26). This confirms the idea that these two characteristics of tasks are associated. For the most part, the control variables included in the analysis also have statistically significant effects on task uncertainty.

The second hypothesis (**H_2**) holds that task variety will be positively associated with organic management. Here, we have four measures as possible dependent variables: teacher control, staff cooperation, supportive leadership, and the organic management composite (which combines the first three scales into a single measure of organic management). Table 2 shows support for this hypothesis in the data, but the effects are small. In the two-level HLM regression analyses conducted here, the effect of task variety on teacher control was positive and marginally significant (β = .061, p = .066, adjusted R^2 within schools = .09); the effect of task variety on staff cooperation was positive and statistically significant (β = .086, p = .051, adjusted R^2 within schools = .09); the effect of task variety on supportive leadership was positive and marginally significant (β = .076, p = .08, adjusted R^2 within schools = .08); and the effects of task variety on the overall measure of organic management was positive and statistically significant (β = .071, p = .03, adjusted R^2 within schools = .10). Overall, then, the data

TABLE 1

HLM/2L Regression Analysis Showing Effects of Task Variety and Other Variables on Task Uncertainty*

	β *(standard error)*	*t-statistic*	*p-value*
Sex	.158 (.032)	2.47	.01
Ethnicity	.166 (.096)	1.74	.08
Experience	-.201 (.048)	-4.18	.00
Education	-.181 (.071)	-2.55	.01
Task Variety	.393 (.041)	9.50	.00

Notes: *Statistics are from the within-school portion of a two-level model. The table includes all variables entered into the regression equation, but coefficients are shown only for variables with statistically significant effects (p-value less than or equal to .10).

TABLE 2
HLM/2L Regression Analysis Showing Effects of Task Variety and Other Variables on Measures of Organic Management in Schools*

	Staff Cooperation	*Teacher Control*	*Supportive Leadership*	*Organic Composite*
Sex				
β (standard error)		-.109 (.050)		
t-statistic		-2.18		
p-value		.029		
Ethnicity				
β (standard error)	-.239 (.100)	-.125 (.075)	-.197 (.099)	-.191 (.074)
t-statistic	-2.93	-1.66	-1.98	-2.569
p-value	.017	.096	.046	.011
Experience				
β (standard error)				
t-statistic				
p-value				
Education				
β (standard error)				
t-statistic				
p-value				
Task Variety				
β (standard error)	.086 (.044)	.061 (.033)	.076 (.044)	.071 (.033)
t-statistic	1.94	1.84	1.743	2.157
p-value	.051	.066	.081	.031

Notes: *Statistics are from the within-school portion of a two-level model. The table includes all variables entered into the regression equation, but coefficients are shown only for variables with statistically significant effects (p-value less than or equal to .10).

support the hypothesis that teachers who face more task variety seek out and establish organic forms of management in their workplace environment, although the effect here is not as strong as a committed contingency theorists might have hoped for (at least as judged by adjusted R^2).

The third hypothesis (**H_3**) holds that a consequence of working in environments characterized by higher levels of organic management is increased support for workplace learning. Table 3 shows that this hypothesis also is supported in the data. Here, I have entered the organic management composite as a predictor variable in a two-level HLM regression analysis with workplace learning as the dependent variable. I also controlled in this analysis for the effects of teacher background variables and

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TABLE 3
HLM/2L Regression Analysis Showing Effects of Task Variety and Other Variables on Workplace Learning*

	β *(standard error)*	*t-statistic*
Sex		
Ethnicity		
Experience	-.089 (.050)	-1.78
Education		
Task Variety	.134 (.044)	3.06
Organic Composite	.84 (.057)	14.37

Notes: *Statistics are from the within-school portion of a two-level model. The table includes all variables entered into the regression equation, but coefficients are shown only for variables with statistically significant effects (p-value less than or equal to .10).

for task variety. Table 3 shows that organic management has positive and statistically significant effects on workplace learning (β = .84, p = .000, adjusted R^2 within schools = .88). Clearly, this is a strong relationship, at least as indicated by the R^2 effect size measure.

Table 4 shows the results of the empirical test of the fourth hypothesis (**H_4**). Here, the argument is that the presence of organic management and increased support for workplace learning should decrease teachers' task uncertainty. The data in Table 3 suggest that this hypothesis is not confirmed. For example, in the table, neither workplace learning nor organic management have statistically significant effects in reducing task uncertainty. But a problem with this analysis is collinearity among these two vari-

TABLE 4
HLM/2L Regression Analysis Showing Effects of Task Variety, Workplace Learning and Other Variables on Task Uncertainty*

	β *(standard error)*	*t-statistic*	*p-value*
Sex	.139 (.064)	2.164	.030
Ethnicity	.160 (.095)	1.68	.093
Experience	-.211 (.048)	-4.40	.000
Education	-.185 (.071)	-2.61	.001
Task Variety	.418 (.042)	9.90	.000
Workplace Learning			
Organic Composite			

Notes: * Statistics are from the within-school portion of a two-level model. The table includes all variables entered into the regression equation, but coefficients are shown only for variables with statistically significant effects (p-value less than or equal to .10).

TABLE 5
HLM/2L Regression Analysis Showing Effects of Task Variety and Workplace Learning on Workplace Commitment and Expectations for Teaching Success*

	Workplace Commitment	*Expectations for Teaching Success*
Sex		
β (standard error)		
t-statistic		
p-value		
Ethnicity		
β (standard error)	-.135 (.070)	-.200 (.102)
t-statistic	-1.952	1.96
p-value	.051	.050
Experience		
β (standard error)		-.130 (.052)
t-statistic		-2.51
p-value		.012
Education		
β (standard error)		.128 (.076)
t-statistic		1.70
p-value		.090
Task Variety		
β (standard error)	.177 (.031)	.103 (.045)
t-statistic	5.83	2.29
p-value	.000	.022
Support for learning		
β (standard error)	.210 (.034)	.087 (.048)
t-statistic	6.36	1.68
p-value	.000	.093
Organic Composite		
β (standard error)	.303 (.049)	.283 (.074)
t-statistic	6.20	3.83
p-value	.000	.000

Notes: * Statistics are from within-school portion of two-level model. Table includes all variables entered into regression equation, but coefficients are shown only for variables with statistically significant effects (p-value less than or equal to .10).

ables. As the previous table showed, organic management and workplace learning are so highly correlated that it makes sense to enter only one of these variables into the regression equation at a time. When I did this—entering only organic management as a predictor of task uncertainty—I found that organic management had the predicted effect ($\beta = -.13$, $p = .02$, adjusted R^2 within schools = .03), but that effect was quite small as judged by the R^2 effect size.

Table 5 tests the final hypothesis (H_5), which asserts that organic management and workplace learning increase teachers' motivational outcomes. Here, the data show that the effects of workplace learning and organic management on teachers' expectations for success in teaching are in the predicted direction, but that only organic management has a statistically significant effect ($\beta = .28$, $p = .000$, adjusted R^2 within schools = .03). Table 3 also shows that workplace learning and organic management both have positive and statistically significant effects on teachers' overall job commitment, however (the effect of workplace learning is $\beta = .21$, $p = .000$, adjusted R^2 within schools = .10; the effect of organic management is $\beta = .30$, $p = .000$, adjusted R^2 within schools = .09).

DISCUSSION

Having presented the results of the analyses testing hypotheses about origins and function of organic management in schools, I now return to my discussion of the educational reform themes that motivated this paper in the first place, and to what the data say about the logic of both the reforms and the theoretical perspective that I used to explicate the possible logic of these reforms. At issue in this discussion is the idea that education reforms in the 1990s were heading in two potentially opposite directions. On one hand, educational reformers were seeking to put into place a set of ideas about teaching and learning that promised to make the task of teaching more non-routine—that is characterized by higher levels of task variety and task uncertainty. At the same time, however, reformers wanted teaching to become more of an expert task, which (in the conceptual framework presented in the preceding paper) would require teaching to be characterized by high levels of task variety but *low* levels of task uncertainty.

In this paper, I argued that this contradiction in reform could be resolved *if* the process of reform worked according to contingency theory. According to contingency theory, for example, teachers' who were using the kinds of complex teaching strategies advocated by reformers would face increased task variety, but as this occurred, they would also reach out for administrative support, seek control over decision making in the workplace, and cooperate closely with others (all of which would lead to the establishment of an "organic" form of management in their local environment). Moreover, contingency theory suggests that as organic patterns of management emerged around these teachers, they would experience higher levels of workplace learning, and this would reduce task uncertainty, making teachers' work more like the "expert" task envisioned by reformers. Moreover, this pattern of management would increase teachers' overall expectations for success and job commitment, thereby enhancing overall motivation (and perhaps the performance) of teachers.

The data presented here, and in the preceding paper, provide modest empirical support for this theoretical chain of logic. It is clear from the data provided in the preceding paper, for example, that the "constructivist" teaching envisioned by reformers increases the amount of task variety experienced by teachers. It was also clear from the data presented there that these effects were quite large—at least as judged by standard effect size metrics in social science research. It is also clear from the data provided in the present paper that teachers who work in settings characterized by organic forms of management experience enhanced workplace learning and greater force of motivation in their work, with the relationship between organic management and workplace learning being particularly large as judged by R^2. All of this is consistent with previous research, especially the work of Rosenholz (1985; 1989).

But there are two weak points in the chain of logic sketched by contingency theory. The first is the assumption that teachers who face increased task variety also will manage to establish organic patterns of management in their work environments—for example, by establishing supportive collegial and administrative relationships, or seeking more control over their work. As the data in Table 2 of this paper showed, the empirical relationship between increased task complexity (as indexed by the task variety variable developed here) and increased organic management, while statistically significant, was substantively small in terms of "effect" size. Second, the relationship between organic management and the reduction of task uncertainty, while statistically significant, also was surprisingly weak, as my discussion of the findings in Table 3 of this paper show. To some extent, of course, the "strength" of these relationships is underestimated due to measurement error in the dependent variables. But even if we adjust the R^2 figures cited in the text for this problem, we still don't arrive at large effect sizes, at least by conventional standards of social science research. For example, an adjustment for measurement error in the regression equation in which task variety predicts organic management would leave the R^2 effect size virtually unchanged, while an adjustment for measurement error in the regression equation where organic management predicts task uncertainty would increase the R^2 effect size from .03 to about .04. These are *not* "large" effect sizes.

What do the weak relationships of organic management to task variety and task uncertainty say about the logic of contingency theory, and about the logic of educational reform traced out in this paper? With respect to

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contingency theory, I would argue that the data presented here suggest that there is a much weaker relationship between the kinds of tasks workers perform and the kinds of managerial patterns that exist in working environments than contingency theory suggests will be the case. Thus, while the effect of task complexity on organic management hypothesized by contingency theory shows up in the data analyzed here, the empirical relationship between these two variables is so small as to suggest that task variety and organic management are nearly independent of one another. This should not be surprising for at least two reasons. First, a good deal of organization theory—including contingency theory—has been built under the assumption that "norms of rationality" are operating within organizations so that people who experience task variety are assumed to act positively to reorganize their working environments in ways that successfully manage this complexity. But that is an idealistic assumption, as many "post-contingency" theorists in the field of organization research have argued. In fact, post-contingency theory research has gone a long way to explaining the structure and functioning of organizations *without* invoking norms of rationality or assuming that rationality is the dominant normative perspective shaping the actions of individuals within organizations. So, what we might have found in the weak relationship of task variety to organic management in this paper is simply that people aren't as rational as contingency assumes they are.

But even if people were operating according to norms of rationality, as they might be, decades of organizations research suggests that rational actors are but one factor contributing to the structure and functioning of organizations. In schools, for example, we know that factors like school size, school mission, and unique historical circumstances also shape the ways in which schools are structured and function. This is certainly the case with the development of organic management in schools. In analyses not reported here, for example, I found that roughly 35 percent of the overall variance in organic management was between schools, suggesting that forces other than the positive agency of presumably rational actors is shaping patterns of organic management in schools (for comparable results, see Rowan, Raudenbush, and Kang, 1991).

There is also very weak support for the idea that organic management reduces task uncertainty in the data analyzed here. To be sure, there was a weak statistical relationship in the predicted direction, showing that the teachers who reported working in an environment characterized by organic management also reported experiencing less task uncertainty. But, as discussed previously, this was a tiny relationship, accounting for less than 3 percent of the variance among teachers in their perceptions of task uncertainty. Here too, I believe we might have run across the pitfalls of assuming rationality within organizations. After all, it would be possible for individuals to support each other as colleagues, and to gain control over decision making, and to have none of this make a real impact on the task uncertainty they face. What organic management does appear to do well is promote a sense of workplace learning, shore up teachers' sense of commitment to the workplace, and (to a lesser extent) increase expectations for success in teaching.

What, then, does of all this imply about the reform conundrum I have been addressing in this paper? I think the data presented here (and the data I presented in the preceding paper) tell us very clearly that when instructional practices based on constructivist theories of teaching and learning are implemented by teachers, teachers work becomes more non-routine. But I think it is also safe to conclude that non-routine teaching won't be turned in any noticeable way into "expert" teaching, either by some automatic movement toward organic management on the part of practitioners engaged in such work, or even by some independent movement toward organic management promoted by forces other than teachers. In fact, it appears from the data presented here that patterns of instructional practice, and patterns of school management, are largely *dis*connected from one another. Yes, a relationship exists, but it is so tiny that one wonders whether the connection of organizational patterns to teachers' perceptions of task could ever be perceived without the kind of complex statistical procedures used—especially since teachers' task perceptions seem to be much more powerfully affected by teachers' beliefs about instruction, their disciplinary specializations, and structural and historical forces operating at the level of the school. Yes, there is empirical support for the logic of contingency theory, but the data presented here suggest that the "causal" forces sketched in contingency theory don't provide the powerful connection between instructional tasks and school management that many educational theorists or reformers might want.

This does not mean, however, that contingency is without value in educational research. In fact, as the preceding paper demonstrated, the ideas of contingency theorists are quite powerful in explaining the nature of teachers' work—and they map quite closely and very logically onto arguments found in research on teaching. Thus, oddly enough, as a theory of teaching, contingency theory has proven quite powerful; but as a theory of instructional management in schools, it appears to be much less powerful.

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CHAPTER 7

COLLECTIVE EFFICACY AND SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

A Multilevel Analysis of Teacher Influence in Schools

Roger D. Goddard

This study investigates the effects of collective efficacy on the level of influence that teachers have over important school decisions. The paper begins with a review of the theoretical underpinnings and history of the study of collective efficacy in schools. Next, a rationale for why collective efficacy should be related to school organizational features such as teacher influence is advanced. Using data gathered on 428 teachers in 45 urban elementary schools in the Midwest, the author employs multilevel modeling to demonstrate that the practice of involving teachers in important school decisions varies widely among schools and, that collective efficacy is a significant positive predictor of these differences. The implications of these findings for school improvement and the continued study of collective efficacy are discussed.

The search for school characteristics that enhance school effectiveness and that are subject to the influence of educational leaders is not new to research in educational administration. A recent addition to this line of organizational inquiry is a group of studies that focus on the role of collective efficacy in schools. These studies apply social cognitive theory to gain new insight into enduring questions about how schools make a difference to students' academic success. The initial results of these collective efficacy studies have been promising. For example, we know that collective efficacy positively influences student achievement (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, 2001;

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Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000) and teacher efficacy (e.g., Goddard & Goddard, 2001). From the perspective of social cognitive theory, such relationships exist because high collective efficacy fosters resiliency to setbacks that might otherwise convince an inefficacious faculty to give up. Put differently, when school faculties believe in their conjoint capability to educate students, individual teachers are more likely to also believe in their personal capabilities and to put forth the effort required to teach students effectively.

The strong relationship between collective efficacy and student achievement demonstrates that social cognitive theory is important to understanding the influence that schools have on students' academic success. Yet, while we know that schools high in collective efficacy tend to have relatively high levels of student achievement, we actually know very little about how these schools are organized differently. Simply put, we know little about what collectively efficacious schools *look like.* In light of this gap in the knowledge base, the purpose of this research is to provide new insight into how collective efficacy is related to school organization.

The goal of the investigation was to learn what role, if any, collective efficacy plays in the organization of schools. The aspect of school organization addressed in this paper is the extent to which teachers have influence over school decisions. Specifically, I examined whether collective efficacy predicted differences among schools in the amount of influence teachers reported they had. Collective efficacy was hypothesized to be significantly and positively related to the practice of involving teachers in decisions that affect their collective future.

The purpose of this paper is to enhance our knowledge of school organization by examining how organizational practices differ across schools as a function of collective efficacy. To place this research in context, I review the social cognitive underpinnings and history of the study of collective efficacy in schools and follow this with a rationale for the specific hypothesis investigated in this paper. After describing the methods and results of the study, I conclude with a discussion of the findings and suggestions for school improvement and future research on collective efficacy.

ORGANIZATIONAL AGENCY AND COLLECTIVE EFFICACY: A SOCIAL COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE

Analogous to self-efficacy, collective efficacy is associated with the tasks, level of effort, persistence, thoughts, stress levels, and achievement of groups (Bandura, 1993, 1997). According to Bandura (1997), "collective efficacy is concerned with the performance capability of a social system as a whole" (p. 469). For schools, collective efficacy refers to the perceptions of teachers in a school that the faculty as a whole can organize and execute the courses of action necessary to have positive effects on students.

The meaning and impact of collective efficacy is better understood by considering the assumptions of Bandura's (1986, 1995, 1997) social cognitive theory. A key assumption of social cognitive theory concerns the existence of organizational agency (Bandura, 1993, 1997; Goddard, 2001, Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). Organizational agency refers to purposeful choices that groups make in light of their perception of collective capability to reach given goals. Organizational agency is evidenced in schools, for example, by decisions to engage in activities that support specific school goals (e.g., when a school pursues a plan to increase student achievement by adopting a more rigorous curriculum). The higher a group's perception of capability to reach a desired goal, the more likely is the group to pursue the goal and put forth the effort required to succeed.

Given the influence of collective efficacy on organizational activity, it is important to consider how collective efficacy perceptions form in groups. Organizations make choices in light of what they have learned from prior related experiences. In the language of social cognitive theory, these prior experiences are referred to as the sources of efficacy-shaping information that groups weigh when assessing their collective capabilities. The sources of efficacy-shaping information are described below.

Efficacy-Shaping Information

Bandura (1997) describes four sources of efficacy-shaping information – mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and affective state. Among these, the strongest source of efficacy information is that obtained through mastery experience (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Maddux, 1995). Indeed, Goddard (2001) demonstrated that about two-thirds of the variation in collective efficacy among schools is explained by school mastery experience, even after controlling for school demographic characteristics such as socioeconomic status and minority proportion. Past school successes tend to raise a faculty's belief in its collective capabilities whereas past failures tend to undermine collective efficacy.

A faculty may also learn vicariously about its collective efficacy. Just as teacher efficacy may be enhanced vicariously (Gorrell & Capron, 1988; Schunk 1981, 1983, 1987; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997), so too do organizations learn by observation. A familiar example of this is the tendency of schools to replicate educational programs that have succeeded elsewhere. Similarly, just as groups learn vicariously from other groups, teachers may also be persuaded of their collective capabilities. Such persuasion might take the form of a strong school leader moving a faculty to action. Finally, affective states resulting from collective conditions, such as successes or tragedies that impact all members of an organization, also influence collective efficacy.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY OF COLLECTIVE EFFICACY IN SCHOOLS

Although collective efficacy involves the study of *organizational* functioning, this line of inquiry actually developed as an extension of the study of self-efficacy in *individuals.* Nearly 20 years before the first study of collective efficacy in schools, the concept of teacher efficacy was developed by researchers at Rand (Armor et al., 1976; Berman et al., 1977) who sought to understand what teacher characteristics are associated with student learning and the continuation of educational programs. Their work showed that the higher teacher efficacy, the higher minority student reading gains and the more likely the continuation of certain educational programs.

Since the initial Rand studies, several researchers have provided evidence that teacher efficacy is indeed related to student achievement (e.g., Anderson, Greene, & Loewen, 1988; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Ross, 1992). Importantly, the relationship between teacher efficacy and student achievement is indirect, with teacher efficacy influencing several teacher behaviors and attitudes that, in turn, promote student achievement. For example, Ashton and Webb (1986) observed that "teachers with a high sense of efficacy seemed to employ a pattern of strategies that minimized negative affect, promoted an expectation of achievement, and provided a definition of the classroom situation characterized by warm interpersonal relationships and academic work" (p. 125). Other studies suggest that teacher efficacy promotes organized and planful teaching (Allinder, 1994), the use of activity-based learning (Enochs, Scharmann, & Riggs, 1995), and student-centered learning (Czerniak & Schriver, 1994). Teacher efficacy may also have an indirect effect on student achievement through its positive association with trust (Da Costa & Riordan, 1996), openness to educational consultation (DeForest & Hughes, 1992), positive attitudes toward educational reform (DeMesquita & Drake, 1994; Guskey, 1988; Smylie, 1988), teacher satisfaction (Lee, Dedrick, and Smith, 1991), and increased levels of parental involvement in schooling (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987, 1992).

Collective Efficacy: An Organizational Parallel to Self-Efficacy

If teacher efficacy is associated with productive teacher behaviors that foster student achievement, the parallel organizational-level question is whether collective efficacy is similarly related to differences between schools in organizational behavior. Indeed, it is quite likely that the relationship between collective efficacy and student achievement is also indirect. That is, collective efficacy may foster certain productive school practices, such as the involvement of teachers in school decisions, which in turn enhance student achievement.

Initial studies of collective efficacy in schools, however, did not begin by examining organizational practices. Rather, most have considered the link between collective efficacy and student achievement. For example, the first study to consider collective efficacy in schools was by Bandura (1993) who showed that collective efficacy is positively related to student achievement in high schools. Bandura's study was critical because it was the first to demonstrate that collective efficacy was an important construct with the potential to enrich our understanding of school performance.

Based on the promise of Bandura's (1993, 1997) research, Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2000) worked to develop a measure of collective efficacy. The collective efficacy scale is based on Gibson and Dembo's (1984) widely used teacher efficacy scale, adapted to reflect a group orientation and school concerns. Using the collective efficacy scale, Goddard and his colleagues have shown that collective efficacy varies widely among schools and is strongly associated with student achievement and teacher efficacy (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000; Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Goddard, 2001). These findings are of value because they confirm that collective efficacy is important to school organizations. We still lack knowledge, however, about how the practices of collectively efficacious schools differ from those of less efficacious schools.

RATIONALE FOR HYPOTHESES

Bandura (1997) recently observed, "although perceived collective efficacy is widely recognized to be highly important to a full understanding of organizational functioning, it has been the subject of little research" (p. 468). Since then, several studies have examined the relationship between collective efficacy and student achievement (e.g., Goddard, 2001; Goddard, Woolfolk & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). What is currently absent from the literature, however, is a tangible description of how efficacious schools differ from inefficacious ones in terms of their organizational practices. Of course, social cognitive theory predicts that high levels of collective efficacy foster persistence in the face of setbacks, and a resiliency that helps organizations reach their goals. Social cognitive theory does not, however, explain how such resiliency takes shape.

The purpose of this paper was, therefore, to examine how educational practices differ between efficacious and inefficacious schools. I chose to focus on teacher influence over educational decisions because of evidence from the literature that this should be related to collective efficacy. For example, Bandura (1997) stated, "collective community action provides the vehicle for effecting desired changes [in collective efficacy]" (pp. 500-501). Similarly, Goddard (2001) observed, "that empowering group members can help develop collective efficacy" (p. 25). Both of these claims imply a relation between collective efficacy and teacher influence. Therefore, this research was designed to determine whether high levels of collective efficacy are associated with group member influence over decisions that shape their collective future.

The first hypothesis ($\mathbf{H_1}$) in this paper tested whether levels of teacher influence differed significantly among schools. Presuming that there was significant variation among schools in teacher influence, the following hypothesis was planned for testing.

> $\mathbf{H_2}$: Collective efficacy is a significant positive predictor of differences among schools in the level of influence that teachers report they have over important school improvement decisions.

METHODOLOGY

This section of the paper describes the sample, data collection procedures, measures, and analytic method employed in this study.

Sample

The data for this study were obtained from a survey of teachers in a large urban school district located in the mid-western United States. Fifty-two elementary schools from the district were randomly selected for inclusion. Of these, three declined to participate. The decision rule for including schools in the final sample was to obtain at least five faculty respondents per school, per measure. Surveys were administered to faculties by a trained researcher during regularly scheduled faculty meetings. Within each faculty, survey distribution was randomized such that half the faculty received a survey containing the collective efficacy scale and the other half received a survey containing the teacher influence items. Of the 49 participating schools, four provided fewer than five faculty responses to the teacher influence items. This yielded a final sample of 428 teachers in 45 schools. Importantly, to guarantee their anonymity the teachers surveyed were not asked to report any demographic information (e.g., grade-level taught, gender, etc.) that could be used to identify them. The school district provided data indicating students' free or reduced-price lunch status, race/ethnicity, and academic achievement measured by a mandatory state assessment administered to 4th grade students. These variables were used to construct school-level contextual controls for the multilevel analysis.

School-Level Variables

Collective Efficacy

This study employed a 21-item collective efficacy scale. "Teachers in this school are able to get through to difficult students." is a sample item from the collective efficacy scale. Valid and reliability evidence for scores on the scale is reported elsewhere (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000).

Teacher Influence

The construct of teacher influence was conceptualized as the extent to which teachers were able to exert influence over school decisions. Scale items reflect teachers' influence over curriculum, instructional materials and activities, professional development, communication with parents, student placement, and disciplinary policy.

School-Level Control Variables

I was interested in controlling for other school contextual factors that might, in addition to collective efficacy, be related to differences among schools in teacher influence. Therefore, I used data provided by the school district to construct measures of the proportion of students who received a free or reduced-price lunch, were minority, were female, and a mean mathematics achievement score for each school. Aggregating individual student data to the school level produced school scores for these variables. In addition, I obtained a measure of school size that represented each school's official student attendance as reported to the state department of education for the year.

Multilevel Analyses

An important consideration for any study that examines school effects is the unit of analysis problem (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). Conventional methods require single-level analysis, which often leads to the problems of aggregation bias, mis-estimated standard errors, and heterogeneity of regression. To avoid these problems, I employed hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). HLM allows researchers to investigate whether constructs of interest, such as teacher influence, vary significantly among schools. Further, for those constructs that do vary significantly among schools, HLM permits researchers to determine whether school characteristics (e.g., collective efficacy) are predictive of that variation. HLM was thus the most suitable method for testing the main hypothesis of this study.

Unconditional Model

I began the analysis with a fully unconditional multilevel model of the between-school variation in teacher influence. The purpose of the unconditional model is to determine whether there is any statistically significant variation among level-two units in a dependent variable. The structural equations employed for the unconditional analysis were as follows:

Level 1: $Y_{(\text{INFLUENCE})ij} = B_{0j} + r_{ij}$

Level 2: $B_{oj} = \gamma_{00} + {}_{0j}$

Given my expectation that the level of influence possessed by teachers is not static across schools, I planned the following multilevel analysis to explain this variation as a function of school contextual features and collective efficacy.

Predicting Variation Among Schools in Teacher Influence

The multilevel modeling approach employed to predict between-school variation in teacher influence was the means-as-outcomes analysis (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). Using this approach, I tested several school contextual features and collective efficacy as predictors of teacher influence. At the teacher-level, variation within schools in influence was modeled as follows:

Level 1: $Y_{(\text{INFLUENCE})ij} = B_{0j} + r_{ij}$

Because teachers were anonymous, no teacher-level variables were included in the level-1 model; hence level-1 variation in teacher influence is estimated by r_{ij}.

At level two, I tested the effects of the school-level contextual controls (mean SES, minority concentration, school size, and mean prior achievement) together with collective efficacy. The structural equation for this test was as follows:

Level 2:
$$\begin{aligned} B_{oj} = {} & \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}W_{(\text{Mean SES})j} + \gamma_{02}W_{(\text{Prop. Minority})j} \\ & + \gamma_{03}W_{(\text{Sch. Size})j} + \gamma_{04}W_{(\text{Math})j} + \gamma_{05}W_{(\text{Prop. Female})j} \\ & + \gamma_{06}W_{(\text{Collective Efficacy})j} + \mu_{0j} \end{aligned}$$

This approach assessed whether collective efficacy was predictive of variation between schools in teacher influence after controlling for school contextual factors.

RESULTS

The main question in this research concerned the effect of collective efficacy on teacher influence. To address this question, I decided to control for school contextual factors other than collective efficacy that might be related to between-school variation in teacher influence. The contextual controls were mean SES, mean mathematics achievement, minority concentration, and school size. Descriptive statistics for these variables and others relevant to the study are reported in Table 1. Notably, there is considerable variation across teachers in the level of influence they report, ranging from a low of 2.70 (low teacher influence) to 5.33 (high teacher influence). The extent to which this variability in teacher influence is systematically associated with school membership was the focus of the multilevel analyses that followed. Also, over half the students in the schools surveyed were minority and over 60 percent received a free or reduced price lunch. Thus, the urban schools sampled for this research served a

TABLE 1

Descriptive Statistics for Teacher and School Variables [a].

	Mean	*Std Dev.*	*Min.*	*Max.*
Teacher level (n= 428):				
Teacher Influence [b]	4.05	.59	2.70	5.33
School level (n= 45):				
Collective Efficacy [b]	4.31	.48	3.43	5.30
School size	399.91	109.28	229	710
Proportion of students receiving a free or reduced-price lunch	.62	.21	.10	.89
Minority concentration	.56	.28	.08	1.00
Proportion of female students	.46	.08	.27	.64
Mathematics achievement	200.80	12.70	179.56	231.09

Notes: [a] Variables used in multilevel analyses were subsequently standardized to a mean of zero and standard deviation of one.

[b] Teacher efficacy and collective efficacy were measured using Likert-type scales with items scaled from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

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TABLE 2
Correlations Among School-Level Variables (n=45)

Variable	*Collective Efficacy*	*School Size*	*SES*	*Minority Con.*	*Prop. Female*	*Math. Achieve.*
Collective efficacy	-					
School size	-.31*	-				
Proportion low SES	-.73**	.19	-			
Minority concentration	-.46**	.06	.52**	-		
Proportion female	-.02	.29	-.04	.05	-	
Mathematics achievement	.67**	-.34*	-.78**	-.52*	-.05	-

Notes: **p < .01; *p < .05

large proportion of minority and poor students. Correlations among school-level variables are reported in Table 2.

Psychometric Analysis and Construction of Teacher Influence and Collective Efficacy Scales

Teacher responses to the teacher influence scale items were submitted to a principal axis factor analysis. One factor was extracted with an eigenvalue of 5.467 explaining 54.67 percent of the variance. Factor loadings ranged from .66 to .80. The alpha coefficient of reliability for the teacher influence scale was .93. Teachers' scores for each scale were constructed as the mean of a teacher's responses to the scale items.

The collective efficacy score for each school was obtained from a process that began by calculating a mean score for each of the collective efficacy scale items for each school. This produced 21 mean item scores for each school. At the school level, these 21 items were submitted to a principal axis factor analysis. A single factor was extracted with an eigenvalue of 11.822 that explained 56.30 percent of the variance. Factor loadings ranged from .60 to .93, with all but five items loading above .70. The alpha coefficient of reliability for scores on the collective efficacy scale was .96. Next, within each school the 21 mean scores were averaged to yield an overall collective efficacy score for each school.

Multilevel Results

An unconditional analysis (one-way ANOVA with random effects) indicated significant variation among schools in teacher influence. Specifically,

TABLE 3
HLM Unconditional Model Characteristics: Variation Between Schools in Teacher Influence
(n = 428 teachers in 45 schools)

Intercept (school average)	.008 (.089)
Between-school parameter variance	.275[a]
Within-school parameter variance	.742
HLM reliability estimate	.769
Proportion of variance between schools	.270

Notes: Standard error in parentheses.
[a]Chi-square = 191.48, df = 44, p<.001

variation among the school means for teacher influence (Var (B_{0j})) was 0.275 (Chi-square = 191.48, df = 44, $p < .001$). This finding confirmed that teacher influence does indeed vary systematically with school characteristics. The results of the fully unconditional model are displayed in Table 3. Given that teacher influence varied significantly among schools, I continued the analysis by testing the school-level model planned to explain that variation.

To facilitate comparison of effect sizes in the two-level model, all school-level variables were standardized to a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. The findings of this analysis are reported in Table 4. The results confirmed the main hypothesis of the study. After adjusting for the influence of school contextual features, collective efficacy was a significant positive predictor of variation among schools in the extent to which teachers had influence over important school decisions. More specifically, a one standard deviation increase in collective efficacy was associated with a .41 standard deviation increase in teacher influence. Importantly, when considered together, only collective efficacy was a significant predictor of differences between schools in teacher influence.

Another interesting question addressed by the multilevel analyses concerns the amount of between-school variability in teacher influence explained by the full model. Table 4 indicates that the full model accounted for a 24 percent reduction in between-school variation in teacher influence. In other words, after taking school context into account, collective efficacy explains approximately one fourth of the differences among schools in teacher influence. Notably, the remaining variation among schools in teacher influence is statistically non-zero. Thus, the full model did not explain all of the systematic variation among schools in teacher influence. Hence, there are other features of schools matter to the amount of influence teachers have over school decisions. While this find-

TABLE 4
Full HLM: Prediction of Variation Among Schools in Teacher Influence with Selected School Characteristics (n=428 teachers in 45 schools)

Intercept (school average)	.016 (.074)
Collective efficacy	.409** (.130)
School size	.050 (.062)
Proportion low SES	.204 (.132)
Minority concentration	-.001 (.084)
Proportion female	-.024 (.069)
Mathematics achievement	.101 (.084)
Proportion of variance explained	.24
Between-school variation remaining	.208[a]

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.
[a] Chi-square = 134.65, df = 44, p<.001
** p < .01

ing has important implications for future research, it should not distract from the strong, positive relationship between collective efficacy and teacher influence reported earlier.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to learn how organizational behaviors differ as a function of collective efficacy. The results confirmed the main hypothesis of the study: The higher the collective efficacy of a faculty, the more likely are members of the faculty to have influence over important school decisions. Indeed, even after accounting for the influence of school socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic composition, gender, achievement, and size, collective efficacy still mattered to differences among schools in teacher influence over school practices. The results indicate that a one standard deviation increase in collective efficacy was associated with more than a 40 percent standard deviation increase in the extent to which teachers exert influence over school practices.

These findings have both theoretical and practical import. From the perspective of social cognitive theory, the results underscore the importance of enablement to the exercise of collective agency. For groups to make a difference, they must have a means to do so. Oppressive regimes, petty tyrants, and even dictatorial school leaders depend upon the suppression of group voice. When group voice is silenced, people are likely to see the events around them as outside their control. Conversely, practices that enable group members to exert influence facilitate the exercise of organizational agency. When groups have a say over their collective future, they tend to have higher levels of collective efficacy.

The strong relationship between collective efficacy and teacher influence also has practical implications for school leadership. Namely, the more we know about school practices that are related to collective efficacy, the more we know about what school leaders can do to develop collective efficacy. While an efficacious faculty might naturally seek out opportunities to influence school decisions, an inefficacious group is much less likely to do so. The challenge, then, is how to build a sense of collective efficacy in a faculty that has come to see school problems as beyond its control. The results reported here suggest that one way to develop faculty effort, persistence, and commitment is to involve teachers in school decisions. Bandura (1997) refers to such efforts as group enablement. He observes

> . . . collective enablement programs take many different forms, but the shared assumption is that they work in part by enhancing people's sense of efficacy to bring about change in their lives" (p 503).

The development of collective efficacy vis-à-vis enablement is, however, not an easy process. Collective efficacy is not developed simply by turning over school decisions to a faculty. A faculty with new opportunities to influence school decisions must have carefully structured experiences. The task of the school leader is not to solve all school problems alone but to help a faculty develop its capacity to make effective changes. This requires motivating groups with proximal goals that affect their daily lives so they can quickly see the results of their collective action. As groups gain confidence in their ability to effect desired changes, they begin to see their power to reach more distal goals. It is easy to understand how a debilitated faculty in a low achieving school can hold little hope for a school improvement plan that specifies, "*all* students will pass the state's fourth grade reading test." No one would dispute the need to achieve this goal, but a group must have time to develop confidence before setting out to accomplish goals that although worthy, are seemingly unattainable. To do otherwise is, in most cases, to ask for setbacks that the inefficacious interpret as evidence of their powerlessness. The implication is that to rise to the challenge of high standards, school leaders must work carefully to build the collective efficacy of a faculty. The results of this study indicate that helping teachers

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exert influence over decisions that affect their work is one way to develop collective efficacy in schools.

Finally, the findings of this study raise interesting questions for future research. First, future researchers should consider investigating the relationship between school practices and collective efficacy. In addition to their theoretical importance, such studies demonstrate how to develop collective efficacy in schools. Furthermore, the preceding discussion of school leadership raises interesting possibilities for research on principal efficacy. To be sure, it is quite possible that a principal's efficacy for school leadership has a substantial influence on the principal's propensity to engage in behaviors that build collective efficacy and foster student achievement. Indeed, the results of this study demonstrated that while collective efficacy was a significant positive predictor of variation among schools in teacher influence, collective efficacy did not predict all of this systematic variation. Future researchers may wish to consider other factors, such as principal efficacy and teacher characteristics, that may explain the rest of this variation. At this point in time, however, principal efficacy has received scant attention from the research community. The measurement of principal efficacy and its relationship to collective efficacy, school practices, and student achievement are questions for future research.

CONCLUSION

This research constitutes only a modest beginning for inquiry into school practices that are related to collective efficacy. As educators look for approaches to school improvement that can help all students achieve to high levels, it is timely and important to examine how schools can be empowered to exert control over their circumstances. The strong relationship between collective efficacy and teacher influence provides insight into how practices in high efficacy schools differ from those of less efficacious schools. Moreover, knowledge of this relationship suggests that school leaders may develop collective efficacy by carefully and skillfully enabling teachers to exert influence over their collective future. Given the strong relationship between collective efficacy and student achievement, further research is needed to identify other school practices that are also related to collective efficacy.

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A TEST OF A MODEL OF SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT IN RURAL SCHOOLS

The Significance of Collective Efficacy[1]

Wayne K. Hoy, Page A. Smith, and Scott R. Sweetland

A theoretical model to explain school achievement in rural high schools is developed and tested in this study. Collective efficacy is the key variable in a proposed theoretical system that also includes academic press and socioeconomic status. We postulate that both socioeconomic status and academic press have independent effects on school achievement in mathematics as well as improve the collective efficacy of the school. Collective efficacy, in turn, is hypothesized to have a positive effect on school mathematics achievement. Finally, the analysis concludes with a discussion of strategies to enhance collective efficacy of schools.

Rural schools have always been part of the landscape of American public education. Although much recent attention has focused on the problems of urban schooling, large numbers of students still receive their education in rural settings. Poverty and its accompanying challenges are not limited to urban schools; in fact, poor rural schools confront many of the same issues. The purpose of this study is twofold: first, to explain a model of school achievement in which collective efficacy is pivotal, and then to test the model in a group of rural schools. An earlier study (Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2001) supported the model in a more representative group of

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schools, so we now focus on rural schools to examine the utility of the model in that context.

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Early research on effective schools underscored a number of school properties that were linked to student achievement. For example, Edmonds (1979) and Stedman (1987) developed a list that included strong principal leadership, high teacher expectations for student achievement, an emphasis on basic skills, an orderly environment, and frequent, systematic evaluations of students. Others have suggested similar lists of effective school characteristics (Astuto & Clark 1985; Bossert, 1988; Purkey & Smith, 1983).

Much of the school effectiveness research has emerged from comparisons of so-called effective and ineffective schools. A small number of "effective" and "ineffective" schools were identified and then researchers cataloged school characteristics attempting to find consistent differences between the two groups of schools. Most of these studies did not make a priori predictions about what organizational properties were related to school effectiveness or student achievement. Even fewer studies describe the processes and mechanisms that link school properties to student achievement, that is, provide a theoretical explanation of why certain school characteristics promote achievement. If our understanding is to move forward, then we must develop and test such theoretical explanations.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

It is a challenge to find school properties that go beyond the socioeconomic (SES) characteristics of the school and community to explain student achievement in schools. Recently, however, a few organizational properties have been identified that seem to be good predictors of student achievement. Academic press in the school (Hoy & Sabo, 1998; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991; Sweetland & Hoy, 2000) and collective efficacy of the school (Bandura, 1993, 1997; Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) are two such properties.

Collective Efficacy

During the past two decades, researchers have established strong links between teacher efficacy and teacher behaviors that foster student achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Although teacher efficacy seems to be a good predictor of student achievement, we were concerned with school properties that facilitate student achievement; hence, our focus was on the organizational characteristic of collective efficacy—efficacy of the collective. We suspected that what works at the individual level had implications at the collective level. But if so, why and how?

Bandura's (1986, 1997) perspective on social cognitive theory is useful. His theory is anchored in human agency—the ways individuals exercise some level of control over their lives. Critical in the exercise of control is sense of self-efficacy, that is, "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute a course of action required to produce a given attainment" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Bandura argues that unless individuals believe they can achieve desired effects and avoid undesired ones by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulty. He emphasizes the primacy of human agency— the exertion of control over thought processes, motivation, emotion, and goal achievement. We distinguish between personal agency and collective agency. Personal agency, however, operates within a broad network of sociostructural influences; hence, the mechanisms of human agency also explain the exercise of collective agency, that is, how individual's beliefs about a group's collective capability can work together to produce desired effects (Bandura, 1997). Indeed, Bandura (1993; 1997) was first to argue that one powerful construct that varies greatly among schools and that is systematically related with student achievement is the collective efficacy of teachers within the school. Collective efficacy in a school is the perceptions of teachers in a specific school that the faculty as a whole can execute courses of action required to positively affect student achievement (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001); in other words, the school sees itself as an effective agent of change.

Academic Press

Academic press is the extent to which a school is driven by a quest for academic excellence and it captures a number of critical school properties highlighted in the effective schools research. For example, in such schools, teachers set high but achievable goals; they believe in the capability of their students to succeed; the school environment is orderly and serious; and students, teachers, and principals all respect academic achievement and work for success. Academic press, like collective efficacy, is a collective characteristic of the school, which refers to the normative and behavioral environment of a school. We postulate that teachers' beliefs about the faculty's capability to successfully educate students and the importance of academic performance constitute norms that influence the actions and achievements of schools.

At the collective level, views about academic press are social perceptions. Putnam (1993) refers to such social features as moral resources—ones that are strengthened rather than depleted through their use. The potential for academic press to grow rather than deplete through use is also indicated by the cyclic nature implied by reciprocal causality (Bandura, 1997). To be more specific, if academic press in a school enhances organizational performance, then reciprocal causality suggests that resulting performance improvements may, in turn, strengthen academic press in the school. Thus, to the extent a strong academic press is positively associated with student achievement, there is reason to lead schools in a direction that will systematically enhance emphasis on academics. Such efforts are likely to be rewarded with continuous growth not only in academic press of the school but also in student achievement.

Mathematics Achievement

Student achievement in mathematics is usually measured by standardized tests that are periodically administered to individual students; the results represent an individual measure of student achievement. In the current research, however, we were interested in the level of school achievement in mathematics; in other words, the school was the unit of analysis. We selected mathematics achievement rather that reading because reading is more strongly associated with the socioeconomic characteristics of the home and we were primarily concerned with school effects.

Theoretical Rationale and Hypotheses

Goddard and his colleagues (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000) provide initial evidence that academic press shapes the normative and behavioral environment of a school. To understand, however, *how* the academic press of the school influences student achievement, we need to consider the influence of social norms on the behavior of group members. Social cognitive theory suggests that teachers' perceptions of self and group capability influence their actions, and it follows that these actions will be judged by the group relative to norms about the importance of academic pursuits in schools (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Coleman (1985, 1987) explains that norms develop to allow group members some control over the actions of others especially when such actions have consequences for the group. When teachers behave in ways that conflict with norms of the group, their behavior will be sanctioned; in fact, Coleman argues that the severity of the social sanctions will be proportionate to the effect of norm breaking on the collective. Thus, in terms of academic press, if most teachers are highly committed to academic performance, the normative and behavioral environment will pressure teachers to persist in their educational efforts to have students succeed. Furthermore, the press to persist and perform will be accompanied by social sanctions for those who do not (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000).

In brief, academic press, which helps shape the normative environment of a school, will have a strong influence over teacher behavior and, in turn, on student achievement. Such emphasis on academics creates a school climate in which both teachers and students are more likely to persist in their teaching efforts. When students succeed, they will be motivated to continue their efforts by the respect they get from other students and teachers. Further, teachers are more likely to accept responsibility for student success and not let temporary setbacks unduly frustrate them. Thus, a strong orientation on academic pursuits not only enhances individual teacher performance, but also reinforces a pattern of shared beliefs held by other teachers. Because of the strong influence of group norms, a teacher with a moderate set of academic expectations and beliefs will likely exert greater effort upon joining a faculty with a high press for academic success (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000). Such behavioral changes reflect the normative effect of a school's climate and culture on its individual members.

There is some support for the theoretical explanation that we have just elaborated. Academic emphasis has been positively related to student achievement in urban elementary schools (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000), in middle schools (Hoy & Sabo, 1998) and in high schools (Hoy & Tarter, 1997; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991). Schools with orderly and serious leaning environments, with teachers who set high but achievable goals, and with students who work hard and respect others who do well academically, have higher levels of student achievement, even controlling for socioeconomic level. Moreover, using a similar theoretical rationale for connecting collective efficacy to student achievement, Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy (2001) found that collective efficacy was positively associated with differences between schools in student-level achievement.

Academic press is an emergent characteristic of the school that finds its meaning in collective perceptions of its faculty, that is, it is a property of the collective not the individual. Although an individual teacher may be oriented to academics, that teacher might perform differently depending on whether the school climate is such that others share that perspective. Each teacher individually experiences academic press, as well as other organizational features such as organizational culture and collective efficacy. In other words, the effect of an individual teacher's press for student achievement may be either attenuated or enhanced depending on the collective or school-level academic press. In fact, the academic press of a

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school may positively affect numerous individual teacher behaviors that tend to increase student achievement. Accordingly, we hypothesized:

> **H_1**. The academic press of a school is positively associated with school achievement in mathematics.

Teachers' perceptions of group capability influence their behavior (Bandura, 1997). Further, individual teacher behavior will likely be judged by the group in relation to group norms on collective efficacy. If collective efficacy beliefs shape the normative environment of a school, then they have a strong influence over teacher behavior and, consequently, student achievement. When collective efficacy is high, teachers in a school believe they can reach their students and that they can overcome negative external forces. In such a situation, self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997) explains that teachers are more persistent in their efforts; they plan more; they accept personal responsibility for student achievement; and temporary setbacks or failures do not discourage them. Thus, strong collective efficacy perceptions not only enhance individual teacher performance, but also affect the pattern of shared beliefs held by organizational members. With strong group norms for efficacy, a teacher with average personal efficacy beliefs is likely to exert even more effort upon joining a faculty with high levels of collective efficacy. These behavioral changes reflect the normative effect of a school's collective efficacy on its individual members (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Several studies show that aggregated teacher efficacy is associated with increased rates of parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987), school orderliness and teacher innovation (Newman, Rutter, & Smith, 1989), and suspensions and dropout rates (Esselman & Moore, 1992). Although such studies suggest that the organizational characteristic measured by aggregated individual *teacher* efficacy have positive effects, *collective* teacher efficacy was not examined. In fact, collective efficacy in schools has received little attention. Our search for studies of collective efficacy and student achievement revealed very few (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000).

In his pioneering study of collective efficacy and student achievement, Bandura concluded that student achievement (aggregated to the school level) was significantly and positively related to collective efficacy, and perhaps more importantly, collective efficacy had a greater effect on student achievement than did student socioeconomic status (aggregated to the school level). Likewise, Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2000) used multi-leveling modeling techniques to demonstrate that collective efficacy was positively related to differences among schools in student mathematics and reading achievement.

Collective efficacy, like academic press, is an emergent characteristic of schools, which gains its meaning from collective perceptions. Even though the concept is not reducible to the individual measures, collective efficacy is experienced individually by teachers. For example, although an individual teacher may be inefficacious, that teacher might perform differently depending on whether most teacher colleagues in a school share strong perceptions of collective efficacy. In other words, the effect of an individual teacher's efficaciousness can be either reduced or strengthened depending on the collective efficacy of a school. Hence, collective efficacy like academic press, can positively influence a number of teacher behaviors that increase student achievement. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

> **H_2.** The collective efficacy of a school is positively associated with school achievement in mathematics.

A Proposed Theoretical Model

A major limitation with much of the research in education is the tendency to look at bivariate relationships, that is, one independent and one dependent variable as in the preceding hypotheses. What is often neglected is an examination of a set of variables that forms an explanatory system. How do the variables in the current study work together to explain school achievement in mathematics? To that end, we propose a theoretical model.

We have developed the concepts of collective efficacy, academic press, and school achievement. Socioeconomic status (SES) is another important variable to consider when looking at school achievement because it is invariably a strong predictor of student success (Coleman, et al., 1966); in fact, it is difficult to find organizational variables that are as potent in predicting achievement. The two organizational variables that we have selected for study, collective efficacy and academic press, have the potential to promote school achievement. But how do these variables work together to determine achievement?

Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986; 1993; 1997) is pivotal to answering this question because it provides the linkage between these variables and achievement. Higher teacher efficacy promotes persistence in teacher effort, supports challenging goals, encourages teachers to accept responsibility for student achievement, and enhances teachers' abilities to overcome temporary setbacks and failures. In other words, teacher planning, responsibility, persistence, and effort in the face of setbacks are critical behaviors that foster student achievement and are strongly related to and reinforce teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998).

We propose the following propositions as we develop a theoretical model to explain student achievement in schools:

a. High SES of a school means that in general students come from families that stress academic success and have the resources to support academic achievement. Hence, we expect that SES and academic press will be related.

b. SES by itself should support high academic achievement because of the resources and advantages that are inherent in wealth.

c. SES should be directly related to collective efficacy. Part of developing strong teacher efficacy is assessing the difficulty of the task at hand (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1997). When teachers are confronted with high SES students, they face a minimal set of obstacles to overcome from the home and community. Their job is more manageable and a collective belief that the school can make a difference in the academic performance of students seems likely. On the other hand, low SES students are more likely to present difficulties from outside the school that teachers believe they may not have the power to overcome; hence, collective efficacy should be higher in high SES schools.

d. The academic press of a school should positively affect both collective efficacy and school achievement. A school environment that is orderly, serious, and focused on academics (high academic press) should promote norms of collective efficacy, that is, the collective belief that teachers have the capability to execute the courses of action required to make a difference in the achievement of their students. Academic press acts as both a form of verbal persuasion and as vicarious experience, which according to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997), enhances collective efficacy. For example, when the press for academics is strong, teachers are persuaded by

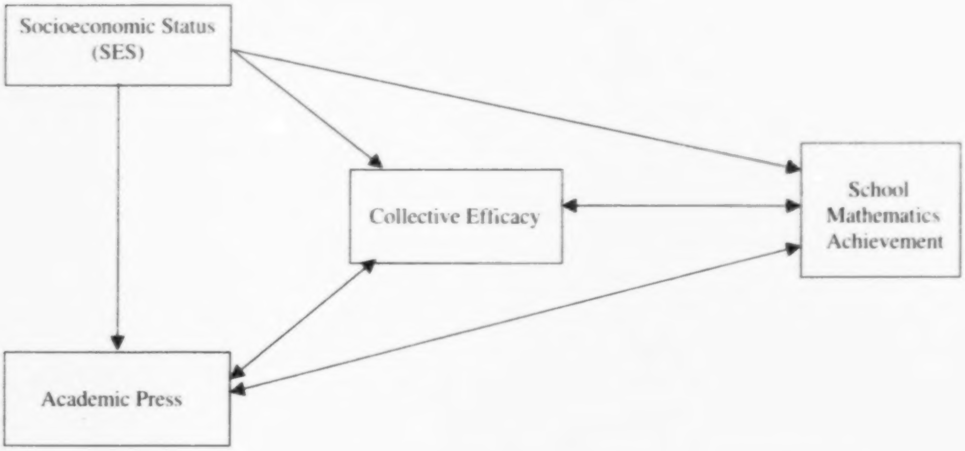


FIGURE 1
A Theoretical Model of School Achievement

> the words and actions of their colleagues, that they to can make a difference in the achievement of their students. Furthermore, as we argued earlier, high academic press should promote a school climate in which teachers persist in their academic efforts and thus affect student achievement.

In brief, the critical ingredient of our explanatory model is collective efficacy. We have argued that both SES and academic press produce higher collective efficacy. The model suggests that collective efficacy should have the strongest impact on school achievement for two reasons. First, both SES and academic press flow through collective efficacy. Second, greater efficacy leads to greater effort, persistence, and more challenging goals, which in turn produces better performance and higher achievement. The model is summarized in Figure 1.

METHOD

To test the hypotheses and model guiding this study, data were collected and analyzed from rural high schools in Ohio. The sample, data collection procedures, measures, and methods are described below.

Sample

Using information from the Ohio Department of Education, 55 rural schools were identified as those that were below the mean on the state's urban-rural index, which is based on population density. The average size of the rural schools in the sample was 533 students (Range: 150-1339, SD = 244.43). The Ohio Education Department estimates that about 60 percent of the 611 districts are rural, and the National Center for Educational Statistics reports that about a third of all Ohio students are educated in rural schools. Rural high schools tend to be smaller and poorer than the typical high schools in Ohio. The 32.4 percent of rural students in Ohio is close to the 27.4 percent of rural students in the country as a whole (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1999).

Research Instruments

In order to test the hypotheses and theoretical model of this study, operational measures for socioeconomic status (SES), academic press, collective efficacy, and school achievement in mathematics were required. The Organizational Health Inventory (OHI) was used to measure aspects of school health (Hoy & Feldman, 1987) and the Collective efficacy scale was employed measure the collective efficacy of the school (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Goddard, 2001).

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

An index of SES was created by the Ohio Department of Education based on composite measure of the inhabitant's typical income, overall level of college education, and their professional leanings. We used the state's index as a measure of socioeconomic status for the high school.

Academic Press

Three subtests of the Organizational Health Inventory (OHI) for secondary schools (Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991; Hoy & Tarter, 1997) were combined to operationalize academic press. In an earlier factor analytic study (Hoy, Hannum, & Tschannen-Moran, 1998), the organizational health subtests of academic emphasis, resource support, and principal influence were found to form a second-order factor called academic press. Academic press was composed of 18 Likert-type items. Teachers described the extent to which students, teachers, and administrators worked together to develop a strong academic orientation in the school. Examples of items included the following, "Students respect others who get good grades," "The school sets high standards for academic performance," "The learning environment is orderly and serious," "Extra materials are available if requested," "The principal works well with the superintendent." Teachers responded to all items along a four-point scale from "rarely occurs' to 'very frequently occurs.' In the current sample the alpha coefficient of reliability for the composite scale was .88. Construct validity of the scales is reported by Hoy, Hannum, and Tschannen-Moran (1998).

Collective Efficacy

A short version of the collective efficacy scale (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Goddard, 2001) was used in this study. The scale is composed of 12 Likert-type items. Teachers describe their extent of agreement with each item from "strongly disagree" to "strongly disagree" along a 6-point scale. Examples of items include the following: "Teachers in this school are able to get through to the most difficult students," "Teachers in this school believe that every child can learn," "These students come to school ready to learn," "Students here are just not motivated to learn (scored in reverse)," and "Teachers here don't have the skills needed to produce meaningful learning." Alpha coefficients of reliability are typically in the .90s; in the current sample the reliability was .98. Evidence of the predictive and construct validity of is presented elsewhere (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Goddard, 2001).

School Achievement in Mathematics

School achievement in mathematics was measured by the Ohio Department of Education. Each year students take a 12 th grade proficiency test in mathematics. Content validity evidence is provided by the extensive involvement of expert educators in the development and selection of items. Reliabilities of the test for the past five years have ranged from .91 to .92. Because we were interested in the school as the unit of analysis, our concern was in the percent of students that passed the exam; hence, school achievement in mathematics was measured by the percent of students passing the 12th grade proficiency test in mathematics.

Data Collection Procedures

Data for academic press and collective efficacy were collected from the faculty of each school during a regularly scheduled faculty meeting. A trained researcher administered the research instruments. One set of teachers in each school, selected at random, was administered the Organizational Health Inventory (OHI) to measure academic press, and a separate, independent random group, responded to the Collective Efficacy Scale. This procedure ensured a methodological independence between the variables and was feasible because the unit of analysis was the school and all data were aggregated to the school level. All the teacher responses were anonymous. SES and Proficiency Test scores for each high school were collected from the Ohio Department of Education.

Statistical Analyses

The unit of analysis for this study is the school—the collective faculty perceptions of academic press and collective efficacy and the percentage of students for each school passing the 12 th grade mathematics proficiency test. All of the variables are descriptions of the properties of the school, not the teacher. Thus, analyses were performed on school means rather than on teachers; that is, individual responses were aggregated for each instrument at the school level. First, the general hypothesis was tested using correlational analysis. Then, a path analysis was used to get test the proposed theoretical model.

RESULTS

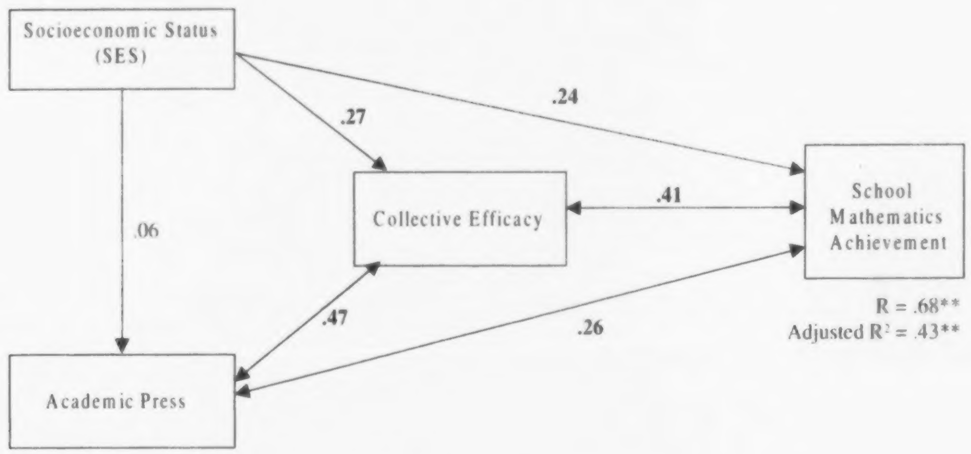
Correlational analysis supported the hypothesis that academic press of a school is positively associated with school achievement in mathematics ($r = .48$, $p < .01$). Because SES is often related to student achievement, we computed a partial correlation controlling for SES, and again the hypothesis was supported (partial $r = .48$, $p < .01$); the stronger the academic press of the school, the higher the degree of school achievement in mathematics.

The second hypothesis proposed a significant positive relationship between the collective efficacy of the school and school achievement in mathematics. This hypothesis was also supported ($r = .61$, $p < .01$). Even controlling for SES, the relationship remains substantial ($r = .56$, $p < .01$); the greater the collective efficacy of a school, the higher the degree of school achievement in mathematics. The descriptive data and correlational analyses are summarized in Table 1.

Next, we turn to a test of our explanatory model of school achievement using path analysis. The first step in testing the model was to regress school mathematics achievement on all variables in the system. As predicted, socioeconomic status, academic press, and collective efficacy all had significant, independent effects on school mathematics achievement ($\beta = .24$, $p < .05$; $\beta = .26$, $p < .05$; $\beta = .41$, $p < .01$ respectively). Next, collective efficacy was regressed on socioeconomic status and academic press. Again as predicted, both SES and academic press were significantly related to collective efficacy ($\beta = .27$, $p < .01$ and $\beta = .47$, $p < .05$, respectively, $R = .55$, $p < .01$). The path analysis supported the model except for one relationship; surprisingly, there was no relationship between SES and academic press. At least in this sample of rural schools, SES was not related to academic press ($r = .06$, ns). The three variables in the model, SES, academic press, and collective efficacy, combined to explain 43 percent of the school mathe-

TABLE 1 DESCRIPTIVE AND CORRELATIONAL STATISTICS

	Mean	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*
SES	-.46	.39	-1.21	.63
Academic Press (AP)	49.43	4.59	37.97	59.47
Collective Efficacy (CE)	47.86	4.04	38.77	58.15
School Mathematics Achievement (Ach)	53.31	12.49	29.30	79.40
	SES	*AP*	*CE*	*Ach*
SES	1.00	.06	.30*	.38*
Academic Press (AP)		1.00	.49**	.48**
Collective Efficacy (CE)			1.00	.61**
School Mathematics Achievement (Ach)				1.00



Bold coefficients are significant.

FIGURE 2
A Test of the School Achievement Model: A Path Analysis

matics achievement (R = .68, $p < .01$). Moreover, collective efficacy is the strongest predictor of school mathematics achievement. The results of the path analysis are summarized in Figure 2.

DISCUSSION

The theory guiding this study was useful; both hypotheses as well as the school achievement model received substantial support. We were successful in selecting two variables, academic press and collective efficacy, that were more important in explaining school achievement than socioeconomic status. This finding seems especially important and significant because it is easier to change the academic press and collective efficacy of a school than it is to influence the socioeconomic status of the student's family.

The results support our assumption that teacher norms of a school have an impact on teacher behavior, and school norms that support academic achievement and collective efficacy are particularly important in motivating teachers and students to achieve. A strong focus on academic pursuits seems not only to direct the behavior of teachers and help them persist, it also reinforces a pattern of shared beliefs held by other teachers and students. Both teachers and students are motivated by a strong academic press in the school; and students are likely to respond positively to the respect they get from parents, teachers, and other students for their academic success just as teachers are likely to respond positively to the respect they get from other teachers, administrators, and parents when their students succeed.

Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997) assumes that teachers' perceptions of group capability influence behavior; thus, collective efficacy beliefs shape the normative environment of the school and influence both teacher behavior and student achievement. The results are consistent with the explanation that strong collective efficacy leads teachers to be more persistent in their teaching efforts, set high and reasonable goals, and overcome temporary setbacks and failures.

The findings for this sample of rural schools also show that academic press and collective efficacy work both independently and conjointly to enhance school achievement. Our results support the explanation that, although both socioeconomic status and academic press have direct, independent effects on achievement, both contribute to stronger collective efficacy, which in turn promotes greater school achievement. Recall that collective efficacy builds greater teacher effort, supports challenging goals, and enhances teachers' ability to overcome temporary setbacks (Bandura, 1986, 1993, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). The results also underscore our suggestion that collective efficacy is the significant variable in our model in influencing school achievement. It has the strongest independent effect on achievement, and the other two variables "flow through" efficacy beliefs and create stronger collective efficacy. The model that we have proposed and tested is a dynamic one with direct and indirect effects. Moreover, some of the relationships are reciprocal; for example, collective efficacy promotes higher school achievement, but it is also likely that higher school achievement also produces greater collective efficacy.

IMPLICATIONS

How can we promote collective efficacy in schools? Bandura's theory and research (Bandura, 1986, 1993, 1997) are useful in this regard. Bandura (1997) observes that because schools and teachers are confronted with a host of challenges involving such things as public accountability, responsibility for student success, and minimal control over the workplace, the task of developing high levels of collective efficacy is difficult, but he argues not impossible. Schools, like individuals, learn. Bandura's (1997) four sources of self-efficacy—mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and emotional arousal—apply to the development of collective efficacy as well as individual teacher efficacy. For example, a school may respond to declining achievement scores by initiating a curricular reform that has been effective in a neighboring district. This response is a self-regulatory process on the part of the school that is informed by the vicarious leaning of its teachers and administrators (Hoy & Miskel, 2001).

School administrators need to understand that Bandura's four sources of collective efficacy and then find ways to nurture them. For example, principals and superintendents need to lead in ways that promote mastery experiences for teachers. That is, they need to create organizational situations in which teachers can succeed with students. At a minimum, teachers need adequate instructional resources and time and help to develop the instructional skills needed for success.

Teachers also need role models to demonstrate how skills are applied to achieve successful outcomes. Direct positive experiences (mastery) and vicarious experiences (modeling) are two critical aspects in the development of efficacy. As teachers experience success in their own classrooms and listen to stories about the accomplishments of their colleagues as well as success stories of other schools, they develop beliefs in their own capabilities to succeed. Thus personal teaching efficacy promotes collective teaching efficacy, which in turn reinforces personal teaching efficacy. We suspect the culture of a school is closely related to collective efficacy. As stories of success are told and retold, positive collective efficacy probably becomes a pervasive and functional element of the school culture.

Another method of strengthening a faculty's conviction that it has the capabilities to achieve what it seeks is verbal persuasion. Teachers can be changed by talks, workshops, professional development, and feedback about progress and achievement. Indeed, the more cohesive the faculty, the more likely the group as a whole can be swayed by sound argument (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). Verbal persuasion alone, however, is not a potent change agent, but coupled with models of success and positive direct experience, it can and does influence efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997).

Just as individuals have affective states so too do organizations. Efficacious schools tolerate pressures and conflicts and continue to function effectively because they have learned to adapt and cope with difficulty. The affective state of a school has much to do with how it interprets and confronts its challenges. The behavior of school leaders seems likely to influence those interpretations in either positive or negative ways. Leadership that is calm in the face of conflict goes a long way toward limiting misinterpretation of events and either over- or under-reaction.

What are the consequences of high collective efficacy? Three important conclusions are suggested in efficacy literature: efficacious schools are more likely to accept challenging goals, demonstrate stronger effort, and persist in efforts to overcome difficulties and succeed. Of course, the opposite is true. Weak collective efficacy is likely to lead to reduced effort and a propensity to give up when things get tough. Our research findings in rural schools are consistent with this theory of collective efficacy and its impact on school achievement.

The one facet of our model that was not supported was the predicted relationship between SES and academic press. Earlier research (Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991; Hoy & Sabo, 1998) revealed positive relationships between SES and academic press; the higher the SES, the stronger the academic press in a school. Why did we not find such a relationship in this sample? A couple of possibilities come to mind. This was a sample of Ohio rural schools, and these rural schools were poorer than typical Ohio high schools.

Table 1 shows that the average SES of this sample was -.46. The Ohio Department of Education has standardized the SES index such that the mean is 0 and the standard deviation is 1. Thus, this sample of rural schools is much poorer than typical schools in Ohio; as a group, the schools are about a half of a standard deviation below the mean for all high schools. Most of these rural schools were below average in socioeconomic status. It seems that in rural schools in Ohio, socioeconomic status is not a factor in promoting or hindering academic press. The culture of schools and communities in rural communities may be relatively unaffected by socioeconomic status. It may be the combination of rural and lower socioeconomic status that mutes the SES-academic press relationship, but that is an empirical question for other researchers in other samples.

Although our model of school achievement worked quite well in rural schools, we believe that the assumptions and arguments of the model apply to non-rural samples. In fact, the model was tested and supported in an earlier study (Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2001) of a more representative sample of schools that included suburban and urban schools. In that more diverse and representative sample, the only difference was that academic press did not have the strong, independent impact on school achievement, but it did combine with collective efficacy to influence achievement. The current study is only one of a few published studies that we are aware of that examines the impact of collective efficacy on achievement (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). In all these studies, including the current one, collective efficacy was an important school property for explaining student achievement and school effectiveness, one that needs continued study. Although the initial results are encouraging, we hope that other researchers will test this model of school achievement in other contexts throughout the country.

NOTES

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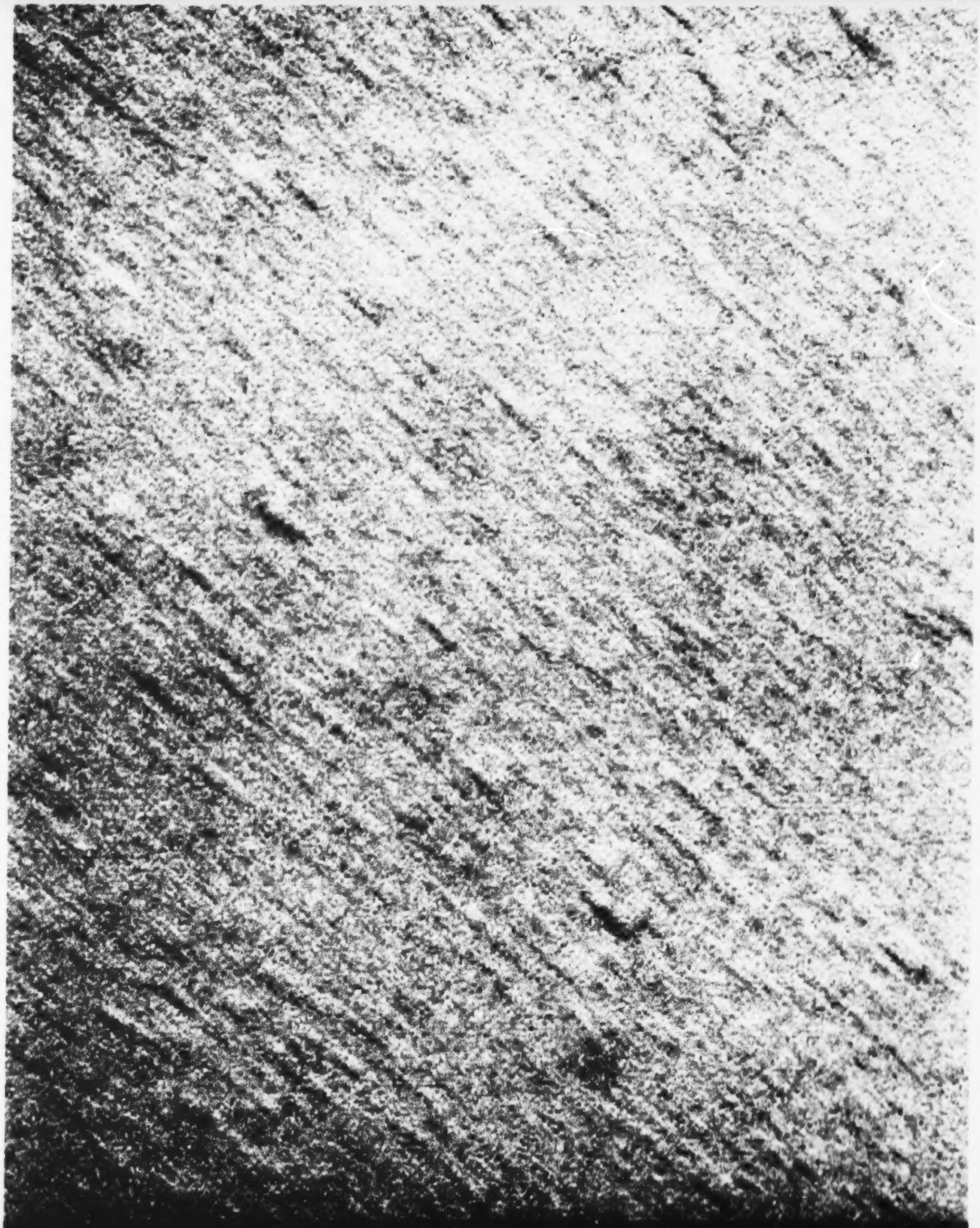

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